

Streaks of Red

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Streaks of Red

by [ValentinesForever1](#)

Summary

Arthur is a Year 11 who is interested in the "punk scene." His friend offers him a position in their band as a guitarist, but the fare is a kiss from one of the band members.

Notes

Honestly, this story was just one of those things I couldn't stop thinking about one day while listening to Sex Pistols on Pandora. This is my first story on AO3, so please forgive me for not being witty with my notes yet.

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See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

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He stood outside the restaurant, cigarette pinched tight between his first two fingers and his thumb. The music was blaring loudly from inside, breaking the sound of silence outside. His mind was otherwise void of thoughts. He barely registered much where he stood, nothing other than the familiar burn as the smoke filled him. He often wondered if this was supposed to fill him with satisfaction, this drug that some coveted like a mistress. No, every drag was to stave off the jitters that would no doubt come the moment he dreamed of giving his addiction up.

The band inside switched to a cover of a Clash song, filling the streets with heavy guitar and the voice of a man who was long past his prime and had no business trying to keep up with the current generation. Why he had taken up the offer to come see this new band still confused him, but he had probably they wouldn't do such a mediocre job of it.

He ran a hand through his choppy hair, a smirk coming to his lips as he remembered how long he had spent working on it. His parents had always pleaded that he get his hair cut somewhere professionally, but the only salon shop in town specialised in women's haircuts. He didn't want some queen or some talkative stylist who would ask him about school or girlfriends or his clothes.

He instinctively tugged the sleeves to his jacket down to fight out what could only be the chill that was numbing his arms. After all, he wasn't someone who fancied catching his death of cold. Besides, if he had to deal with that idiot's insistence of him borrowing a heavier coat, he'd lose his temper. Why the boy insisted on trying to help him out in whatever way possible was beside him. After all, he had never shown one ounce of interest in him, and the kid wasn't his type. He didn't go for the brawny muscle-heads that tried to play hero whenever it suited them.

Somewhere inside the restaurant, he could hear glass breaking and winced, shaking his head. While he could agree that these things were pretty great when the sound was good, he never understand the appeal to wrecking a place of business when the owners would kick them out and never let them back in. Then they would have to find somewhere else in this hick town that would be fine with hosting a punk rock band every week, and he doubted that was an easy process. Still, he could hear the noise pick up inside and knew that things were getting out of hand, and it was impossible to not shake his head at them.

One man stumbled out of the building, and Arthur glanced at him out of the corner of his eye. Immediately, he had to keep from groaning at his misfortune at being found by the one man he'd truly hoped he wouldn't come across that evening. While he knew they travelled in the same circles and definitely went to the same venues, he abhorred the man and did his best to avoid him at all costs. However, it seemed that his efforts had been in vain because two blue eyes turned to lock onto him when Arthur turned his head. A small smile grew into a wolfish grin, and he really did groan then.

“What do you want?” Arthur snapped, backing away from the man as he approached. “I thought I told you I didn’t want to see your pitiful face ever again.” He had to continue his retreat, hissing under his breath at his circumstance. Honestly, it seemed that he couldn’t get a break today. “Hey, haven’t you heard of a thing called personal space, mate?”

“Oh, *lapin*, I finally got you to acknowledge what I am to you,” Francis leered, smirking as Arthur went beet red. “You look as red as your hair, *amour*.” He tugged on one of the numerous red locks that stood out amongst the natural blonde. He then rubbed it between his fingers and smiled as Arthur glared at him. “I’m glad I got to see you; the party in there is a little out of my taste at the moment.”

“Get off me!” He employed a swift elbow into the Frenchman’s ribs. The blonde gasped and grabbed his torso, eyes wide as a shocked smile spread across his lips. “It’d be great if you didn’t sully my ears with your disgusting frog language. After all, I took so many precautions to keep them clean, and I can’t have you ruining my hearing.”

“Well, I think all the loud music that you listen to has already accomplished that,” Francis shot back playfully.

“Fuck you, like you can say much better,” he snapped. Sighing as he realised there was no way he was getting Francis to leave him alone, he decided he might as well try and distract the creep. “You wanna smoke?” he offered, holding out the box of cigarettes to the blonde.

“No, thank you. I remembered to bring my own this week for once.” He leaned against the brick beside green-eyed blonde and pulled out a thin, pretty cigarette from his own silver case. “How has life been, my little Brit?”

The two of them had a strange relationship to say the least. It wasn’t anything too much more than light flirting on Francis’s part and empty threats on Arthur’s, and then they would chat back and forth over a beer or perhaps a cigarette, like they were doing. While Arthur found the other man to be execrable, he had to admit that he never had to pretend to get along with him. He could throw insults the man’s way and know that Francis didn’t take them personally. They had done this for around a year or so, about the same time that Arthur had discovered himself to prefer the more ragged and rough sort of look and personality.

In society’s terms, Arthur was considered to be a “punk.” He wasn’t the type who went home and listened to MCR on repeat or anything- though, he did have a song or two on his iPod that was by the group- he hung closer to the type that came from his home’s scene- the Clash, Sex Pistols, and UK Subs. He preferred his jeans to be skinny and tended to wear them even if he had torn them in some places from brawls in pubs, and he truly didn’t care what sort of shirt he wore as long as it was what some stuffy jackass would strut around in. He currently was in a pair of stiff red jeans and a Rancid tee that his mum had gotten him the year before for his birthday. His fingernails were painted black, meant to match the outfit he’d worn the day before, and a leather jacket with the UK Subs Punk Rock patch stitched into the breast pocket.

In all honesty, he hated the term, but a label was a label. He inhaled another lungful of the contraband cigarette, a gift from his father for doing well in school. Originally, his parents had tried to get him to kick the habit, but quitting was a bitch that had proved too difficult to

kick to the curb. So, on special occasions, they bought him the cancer sticks; otherwise, he paid and they purchased. He had to say that he was surprised at how easily they had accepted it, but it wasn't unlike them to do so for their only son.

Seventeen years ago, Alice and Evan Kirkland had had a blonde little boy who they had raised without a want for anything. They had taken every precaution to avoid spoiling him, but they had never denied him something which they had no reason to. They let him chose whichever clothes he desired, let him dye his hair back in sixth grade when the kids had said blondes couldn't be smart at Maths and Literature, and had made sure that that whichever direction their son wanted to go was properly supported.

When Arthur had discovered how he truly wanted to look and had pulled his mom into the dark shop with harsh music and a heavily tattooed cashier, she hadn't even batted an eye, only reminding him that he had a budget of two hundred pounds for all the stuff he needed for school. He had purchased his pair of skinny jeans, and another four for good measure, and a dozen band tee shirts. He had also picked up a copy of *Nevermind the Bollocks, Here's the Sex Pistols*, which he had seen nestled between a couple of American bands. It had made him smirk at the title, and the cashier had complimented his selection at the counter. That night, he realised exactly why the sweaters and slacks that he had been wearing were no longer appealing.

His first day of Year 10 had to possibly be the best day of his life. He had made sure that he had in his new spider bites and was carefully put together in his new favourite Anarchy in the UK shirt and black jeans that had the chain hanging out of his pocket and belt loop. His teachers had expected him to be unruly, but he'd been happy to surprise them with his normal polite attitude towards those who were above him. His classmates had approached him warily, expecting him to turn and snap his head off. After all, who knew how much the dorky Arthur Kirkland had changed over the summer, what with his new look and the strange music that blared from his headphones where he sat at lunch.

After about a week of getting the cold shoulder from his friends who had decided that his new look was attracting too much attention for their comfort, a boy had approached him, red eyes bright as he looked down at the boy who munched on his small, packed lunch. Arthur automatically hadn't really cared for him, but the two talked back and forth over some apples and the newcomer's offered cake. In about ten minutes, they found some common ground, and the boy introduced himself as Gilbert Beilschmidt, a German immigrant who had come over with his family. He then invited Arthur over to what he fondly called his "table of misfits," and the blonde had discovered he wasn't as alone as his former friends had tried to convince him.

He spent most of his days with Gilbert or Elizabeta, a Hungarian girl who was staying in England long enough to finish high school and then would be touring the continent before settling back in Hungary. They were pretty great to hang with and were polite enough that his parents didn't mind them. Every so often, he would talk to Alfred, a boy who wasn't quite in their circle but tended to stray in there while he and his brother, Matthew, were over at Gilbert's. Mattie and Gilbert had a thing that neither of them was too upfront about, and Alfred and Gilbert were too alike to keep apart, so Arthur tended to see more of the football player than he would've liked. Said football player had a not-so-secret crush on the seventeen

year old, despite being a year younger than the rest of them and not really sharing any interests.

He'd come to the pub with Alfred that night, lured in with promises of a good band and a bar that accepted anyone who had money. However, the band had turned out to be sour, and Arthur didn't feel like drinking after all. Thus, he had decided to venture outside for a smoke.

"My offer still stands," Francis said after a few minutes of silence between them, stirring Arthur from his thoughts. He flicked his cigarette to the ground and smeared it a bit with his boot to make sure that it was truly out. "All you have to do is say yes."

"I've told you no enough times, haven't I, you prat?" he retorted without much venom. The offer wasn't anything indecent, just a position as electric in the small band that Francis, Gilbert, and another boy name Antonio had put together. As great as Gilbert was on the bass, the three of them had realised they wanted someone on electric guitar, and Arthur had been offered up as tribute.

"It's just a couple practices a week, and you're just going to go home and stick your nose in a couple books anyways. It won't be on Friday or Sunday, since I know you and Liz go out then," the platinum blonde boy had pleaded in their tenth year. "And Francis and Toni are pretty cool. They know like the sound you and I do, and all we want to do is possibly throw together something of our own. We just need someone who can play the electric." He had batted his pale eyelashes, giving an exaggerated pout. "If I knew how to play as well as you can play Emily, I wouldn't even be bothering you, but you know that I'm a tool with learning new things."

"Yeah, we study together, remember?" Arthur had thought about it, dwelling on his father's comment that he should join a band if he wanted more experience with the six-string that he had affectionately named Emily. It sat beside the acoustic that Arthur had started playing when he was ten, but Emily had come in his life only a year ago, a present that accompanied the Rancid tee and printed out tabs to a few songs that his mum had noticed he liked to listen to the most. He'd decorated her with a few stickers and had signed his name into top of the guitar, making sure that anyone who picked it up knew whose it was.

Honestly, he had been excited when he first walked into Antonio's garage. The Spanish man had been draped out on a couch, his head in the lap of an Italian boy in Alfred's year who was stroking the sixteen year old's hair. The oldest out of all of them by only a few months, Antonio had sat up with an easy smile and introduced himself as the lead drummer of the band who assisted with vocals when Francis needed it. Gilbert had swaggered in not long afterwards, face covered in the pastel lipstick that Matthew had taken to wearing. It was bubble-gum pink that day, and Gilbert had decided to wear a neon pink long-sleeve to accompany it.

The three of them had bounced ideas back and forth, and Arthur had made some progress on the songs that the three of them were working on. Antonio wrote most of the songs, but he made sure to say that his friends contributed plenty when he asked them to. The three of them had stayed like that for around an hour before Gilbert spoke up.

"Hey, where's Francis? Isn't that pervert supposed to be here, too?"

“Ah, yeah, that was the plan, but he said that his mom and dad needed him at home for a bit before he could come over. Something about needing his help painting one room or the other.” The Spaniard had shrugged and rested his head on Lovino, the Italian who turned out to be his boyfriend. The younger boy seemed a bit angry at being used as a pillow, but he sighed and smiled softly when he noticed what time it was.

“Well, that French bastard better get here soon unless he wants to stop buy during our *siesta* time. I don’t feel like delaying it for him, and I don’t think you’ll last much longer.” He pecked the upperclassman on the forehead and looked down at his notes for class. He wasn’t a part of the band, seeming to be more a groupie than anything, but he liked spending time with Antonio and admitted that he usually came over for at least an hour or so every day.

“*Mes amis!* I am here, so there’s no need to anxiously wait around anymore!”

Arthur had never known whether or not love at first sight existed. After all, it was corny and cheesy, even if his parents claimed it was a completely legitimate thing. However, after looking at the blonde teen who stepped into the garage wearing nothing but a white tee, extremely skinny jeans, and a smile, Arthur could be certain of one thing.

Even if love at first sight was improbable, hate at first sight could definitely happen.

However, not wanting to start off on a bad note with the guy who was going to be the frontman of the band he was hoping to join, he didn’t glare or scowl like he wanted to and instead focused on the patch of skin peeking out from a tear in his jeans from a rather unfortunate attempt at skateboarding with Gilbert. Elizabeta had died laughing, and he had gotten a bloodied knee from it. However, said knee was fine and extremely interesting. More interesting that the French twat that had dropped by.

“Hey, *amigo*, it’s about time you showed up,” Antonio had teased, sitting up and standing to rib the blonde with his elbow. “We were starting to think you weren’t going to show up.”

“Oh, well, beauty takes time, and I heard we were going to be meeting someone new today.” Arthur looked up in time to catch Francis’s gaze, and he saw blue eyes light up in amusement. The hatred burned that much brighter, and he clenched his fists on his knees. “Who is this little morsel? Where did Gilbert pick you up at?”

In no time at all, Arthur was looking up into playful blue. An arm was braced on the back of the couch behind him, pinning Arthur in that spot as he looked up in shock. He was instantly unsettled by the leering smile that was being directed his way, and Francis licked his lips as he stared down at him.

“You look like a trapped little rabbit,” he murmured, grinning. Arthur swallowed harshly, heart racing in his chest as he tried to keep from throwing up at the stench of the guy’s cologne. Francis noticed the movement, and a finger tilted Arthur’s chin up. “A very tasty rabbit.” He leaned in closer to murmur in his ear, “Perhaps you’ll allow me a bite?”

“You-you-!” Arthur sputtered, feeling his face go hot as his friends stared at them, not even moving to help the trapped teen. Seeing that he had to defend himself, he turned back to Francis and decided to give him a what-for.

Basically, he slapped him across the face- so hard that a clean sound echoed in the garage and the blonde's hair snapped to the side. They all sat in silence like that for a few moments, Arthur not sure if he'd committed a taboo and if he was going to get booted. He glanced at Gilbert, the only familiar face in the room really, and tried to get any sort of sign of what to do from the wide, stunned red eyes that had obviously never seen such a thing happen.

Good job, Arthur. Might as well start packing Emily up. It's not like you're going to go any further after that. Just go home and tell Dad that you fucked up your one chance.

Suddenly, Lovino started guffawing, laughing so hard that he was doubled over and clutching his gut. Arthur stared at him, shocked as the brunette laughed to the point of gasping for air as he struggled to contain his laughter. He shook his head and wiped a few tears away, grinning madly. As he regained his composure, he managed a bubbling, "I've never... seen anyone do that to... the French bastard before." He giggled and stood up. "That's too much. I'm going to go get some sodas; anybody want one?"

"I'll take one, Lovi!" Antonio replied with a huge, dopey smile that Arthur was starting to realise was typical of him.

"What about you, hero of my life?" the Italian asked, addressing Arthur.

"Uh, no, thanks, mate. Not a bit fan of soda." *I tend to stick to tea, water, or beer nowadays*, he added silently in his head. He only got beer when he went out with Elizabeta, but he was pretty good at holding his liquor and typically could get in one or two before getting even slightly sloshed. Lovino still just shrugged and went over to the door connecting the house and garage.

"*Mon lapin*, why would you hit me like that when I was just trying to induct you into the band?" Francis whined, finally snapping out of his daze and rubbing the slightly red cheek. "After all, there's a reason we're called the Bad Touch Trio."

"Well, I don't give a damn what you're called. No frog is going to put his hands and shit all over me without a fair fight. Not while there's still blood pumping through these hands." Arthur crossed his arms over his chest. "If that's what it takes, I'll be on my way."

"Sorry, man, but Franny is right," Gilbert said with a shrug. "You gotta kiss one of us to get in, and I'd never kiss anyone but Birdie."

"And Lovi would kill both of us," Antonio added with a little chuckle. "My feisty little Italian," he mumbled with a lopsided smile.

"So, the only one left is me," Francis said with a leering smirk. He crouched down to the Brit's eye-level. "Come on, Arthur, you know you want to kiss these gorgeous lips. I mean, who can resist, right?" He braced his arms on the teen's lap, leaning into his face once more and not even flinching like Arthur did as their breath mixed in the small space between their lips. "Just a tiny peck, *lapin*, but I doubt you can stop there," he said quietly, and their lips brushed with the few words, causing a furious blush to climb Arthur's cheeks.

“No, bugger off, you freak,” he snapped, feeling panicky and wanting nothing more than to flee away from this pervert and his crazy ideas. He stood, quickly side-stepping when he noticed the crotch of his jeans was an inch from Francis’s face. Not trusting the man to not make another advancement, he went over to where Emily sat in her case. He latched her safely inside and picked up the case in his hand. “Hey, if I had to deal with this creep, I’m going to have to say no,” he told Gilbert and Antonio. “I’m sorry.”

“No biggie, man,” Gilbert assured him before shooting Francis a dirty look. He looked back at the Brit and smiled easily. “See you tomorrow at school?”

“Yeah, mate, of course.” He waved them goodbye and had said goodbye on his way out to Lovino, and he wasted no time after that hauling ass home.

Even a year later, Arthur still wondered why he hadn’t just swallowed his pride and kissed the prat, but a part of him shut down the idea of kissing Francis or anyone for that sort of reason. So, the band was still just a trio, as Arthur’s price for joining was still to lock lips with Francis. The Frenchman still tried to tempt him every so often, when they were alone together and the subject strayed there, but he was good about not pressing if Arthur shut him down well enough.

However, it seemed that wasn’t good enough anymore, since Francis walked over to him and pinned him against the brick, arms on either side of the man. Arthur cursed the man’s tendency to wear high-heeled boots since it gave him an inch advantage whereas the two of them would be the same height. He stood over Arthur and stared down at him.

“Why do you have such an issue with this, *lapin*?” he murmured softly, pressing his forehead to the Brit’s and looking into wide, green eyes. “You want to play for us. You want to play Emily to your heart’s content, and all you have to do is kiss me for a moment.” A corner of his mouth quirked up. “Are you really scared you won’t be able to stop at one kiss?”

“Maybe I’m just not a poof like you,” Arthur snapped back, heart beating too erratically for him to convince himself that the close quarters weren’t affected him. “Thought about that?”

“You’re such a liar, *mon lapin*.” He shook his head, wavy blonde hair brushing against Arthur’s chin and causing a shiver to run down his spine. “Don’t you think I haven’t seen you eyeing the men at the bar, flirting shamelessly with anyone who catches your eye?” He tapped his nose, smiling easily. “You are just as much of a- how you say- *poof* as I am.” He tilted his head towards the blonde’s, further decreasing the distance. “So how about you shut up and kiss me already?”

Arthur looked up into those taunting blue eyes, and he realised exactly why he was so averse to kissing this pervert. It wasn’t his flirtatious nature or even the fact that he was French, which shocked Arthur as much as the next guy. It wasn’t the initial hate at first sight, because they had moved past that. No, it was something that Arthur would never say out loud, since it would no doubt make the man laugh at him, and he couldn’t bear that sort of humiliation.

No, Francis meant too much to him for it to be some sort of joke. He was right; Arthur wouldn’t be able to stop at one, little peck, and it seemed like that all Francis was interested in was a kiss and a guitarist. Not once had he shown any romantic interest in him other than

getting the necessary token to be in the band, and Arthur honestly didn't think his heart could take actually kissing the stupid git that he had an ounce of feelings for, only for the Frenchman to shrug, allow him to pass go, and move onto "loving the beautiful men and women of the world."

There was no way his first kiss with Francis was going to be so meaningless.

So, he did as he usually did. He pushed Francis away, trying not to dwell too much on the warm heartbeat he could feel under Francis's shirt as he used his chest as leverage. And he flipped him the bird before making his way back inside to see Alfred about getting a ride home.

Monday brought a fresh day at school, filled with the ever reoccurring thoughts to just go ahead and go homebound. After all, the students around him were barely worth breathing the same air as him, and the only friends that mattered didn't just ditch him after the school bell rung. In fact, the only class they actually had together this semester was lunch, so he didn't see everyone much anyways.

So, he sat in Art, staring at his paper as he zoned out. There wasn't anything worth turning in yet, since he still had a week to finish his profile project. He was glad that none of his friends were in this class, since that meant he would have to deal with the questions surrounding the image he had chosen. Beside the slip of drawing paper he'd been given sat a simple photo of a teen that anyone in his circle would recognise immediately and tattle.

He was more of an artist, so it was natural to see him with a notepad, drawing tablet, camera, or Emily. So, when he had managed to get a photo of Francis standing against the brick of the pub, fingers curled around one of his delicate cigarettes, he had managed to play it off as needing it for school. Which later proved to be true, but at the time it had been just to have. He had framed it at one point and hidden it behind a couple more on his cork board. Normally, all that was visible was the left half- Francis's hand and the cigarette as well as the rest of the dark street, peeking out from behind a photo of Arthur and his parents. He didn't want Gilbert or Elizabeta ratting him out, so he avoided even mentioning Francis if they didn't.

He was stirred from his thoughts by someone clearing their throat. He blinked and looked up to see a skinny lad with curly hair and bright violet eyes hidden behind round frames. He instantly smiled, recognising the kid immediately.

"Matthew, hey. What's up?" he asked, instinctively moving his hand to shield the drawing of Francis. While he normally wouldn't mind, Matthew happened to be Francis's cousin- which was how he and Gilbert had met- and talked with the Frenchman often. "Did you need something?"

"Oh, I just wanted to talk," he replied softly, setting his books and sketchpad down. "You seemed pretty lonely over here, and I want to chatter to someone."

“Well, chatter away,” he offered, shoving the stuff of the guy next to him down a seat so Mattie could sit down. He was the only person who knew that Arthur was interested in someone, but the blonde had never told his friend his interest’s name. It seemed since he discovered who he was, most of his friends had switched from strictly heterosexual to pretty much ninety percent gay in one shade or the other. Matthew, who was bisexual but currently leaned closer to the male persuasion, was an ear for all his little issues, and Arthur had no problems giving advice on him and Gilbert’s relationship if need be. After all, he was their middle man since he could hear both their sides and still stay neutral.

Matthew frowned. “Do you want help with your little ‘I’m single’ issue?”

Damn, that was straightforward. Must be serious. “Well, there’s really only one person...”

“That you’re interested in. Yes, I know, and I think I have an inkling who it is.”

Green eyes almost popped out of his head. “What?” Arthur asked dumbly, trying to keep himself calm. *If he guesses that it’s Francis, then I’ll just lie. I’ll say it’s another upperclassman. Anything to keep him off my back. Francis can’t know I like him, or he’ll never let it go.*

“Yes, and before you try to deny anything, your secret is safe with me.” Violet eyes held green as he used a finger to cross over his heart. “I swear that on all the maple syrup, all the pancakes, and all the Timmies in the world, as well as on Gilbert and I’s relationship. I only found out through careful observation, and also because I’m the only one who watches who you doodle when you’re bored.”

Arthur sighed, knowing that Mattie had him beat. After all, the boy had sworn on *Timmies*. While it had been said slightly jokingly, the part about him and Gilbert had been serious. Besides, getting it off his chest and being able to talk about it with someone could help him when it came to dealing with these stupid feelings. So Arthur sighed and nodded, gesturing to the Canadian to hazard his guess.

“You like my cousin,” Matthew stated, moving his friend’s arm from the paper so that he could get a look at the beautiful rendition of Francis’s face. “And I know admitting that is hard for you, since that sort of thing isn’t easy for you to accept- and because Francis is, well, *Francis*-, but I’m glad you can feel comfortable telling me. As I promised, he won’t catch a word of it from me, and no one else is going to tell him for me or because of me.” He smirked impishly as Arthur, eyes flashing playfully. “After all, can’t let the poor guy get a swelled head over this, can we?”

Despite the fear still making his heart throb in his chest, Arthur managed to smile back. “If it swelled anymore, it would no doubt burst.” He exhaled, letting all the tension leave his body as he did so. “Am I *that* obvious, Mattie?”

“Eh, well, I’m a people watcher who’s good at figuring out different things just by watching. You know, like Benedict Cumberbatch. I can tell which girls got laid over the weekend and which guy is a closet homo just in one glance.”

“Hmm, if I had to guess...” Arthur tapped his chin and looked around at the students in their art class. “Well, Feliks looks a little gay to me,” he joked, referring to Polish boy who had no issues letting everyone, especially all the single men, know his orientation.

Matthew snorted. “That boy never had a closet. He was born under a freaking rainbow, and Elton John went to visit him so he could serenade him into the world.”

They burst into laughter, pressing fists into their mouths so that no one looked over at them weird as they struggled to control themselves. Matthew recovered first, but he said something that made Arthur’s eyes pop out of his head.

“No, I was talking about Ivan,” he said, face blank as he delivered his news.

“Shut the fuck up,” Arthur gasped in shock, and Matthew nodded solemnly. “That guy is so homophobic, though. Didn’t you see what he and Toris did to Feliciano last week?”

Matthew rolled his eyes. “Please, they’re both homophobic. The only reason that Toris started acting that way is because Feliks started coming on to him, and he didn’t want to accept that his best friend has a thing for him. He’ll probably get over by the end of the year.” He shook his head. “No, Ivan definitely is gay, even if he doesn’t know it yet. I’ve seen him with my brother- bickering of course, but you probably figured that- and I swear that he did the whole checking-you-out-wait-no-that’s-gay thing at least fifty times.”

Arthur chuckled. “I bet Alfred would love that. How did he refer to Ivan the other day? ‘The Commie who still has issues figuring out whether he wants to be red or dead?’”

“Which is funny, because I’ve seen my brother actually reading *The Communist Manifesto*, and he couldn’t give a straight answer. Tried to say that it was for school at first, but then I reminded him that I have both History and English with him, and those were the two classes he tried to name. I think he was just curious, but I told him that what Marx wrote is different what the Soviet Union and the others practiced. Or rather, for a few, *still* practice.”

“He would know that if he paid attention in class,” Arthur argued, shaking his head in disbelief. “We just covered things like the Korean War and the American and Soviet Cold War.” He shrugged. “For all of five minutes, but we studied it.”

“Just be lucky we’re not in America; they would’ve talked about it for months,” Matthew said with a shudder. “Really, they focus on stuff for so long over there, what with their history only spanning for a couple hundred years or so. It takes two whole years to teach all of it.”

“Hmph, well, maybe they should focus less on themselves and more on the world as a whole. And I don’t mean only focusing on the world whenever they were at war with it, since that’s the only time they seem to get a glimpse of anything other than that insufferable red, white, and blue.”

“Tell me about it. Alfred doesn’t have a single thing that’s not American-themed or in the colours of their flag.” He shook his head. “It’s no wonder why *Maman* and *Papa* moved back to Canada after only a couple years of living there.”

Arthur didn't miss the small bit of sorrow in those violet eyes at the mention of the boy's home country. They had moved to England only a few years ago so that their father could work at his company's home base. Matthew missed his friends in Canada, but he had also said that he could now visit his family in France with little difficulty.

It was that family in France who had sent Francis home with them one summer, an attempt to get the skirt chaser to perhaps calm down. However, it only resulted in Francis meeting Gilbert and Antonio, which was the opposite of calming down. He later emancipated himself, bought a flat in town, and threw lavish parties on the weekends, playing Bad Touch Trio's music over the speakers. Arthur had gone once, but then they'd had to leave when some guys wouldn't leave Elizabeta alone and had gotten their asses handed to them by Gilbert and Arthur. Francis hadn't kicked them out, but the two had left to escort the frazzled brunette home.

It had been at this party as well that Francis had tried to convince him to join the band again by pinning him against the washing machine. However, at the news that Gilbert needed the blonde to help defend their friend, Arthur had been released. After three months, Arthur had avoided the flat like the devil, not wanting Francis to get any ideas.

"So, if I can ask," Matthew began, drawing Arthur from his thoughts, "why *don't* you want to date Francis if you like him? I mean, he's kind of perverted, but he's nice for the most part and he's popular with men and women alike for one reason or another."

The Brit sighed, looking down at the photo and picking it up in his hands. "That's the main reason, actually. I've seen him when he dates women. He flirts with other people, he leaves them by themselves at parties, and then he dumps them when he wants another." Arthur shook his head and looked up into his friend's eyes, seeing the sympathy and understanding there. "He's the first person I've liked since the incident with Ludwig."

"Ah." Matthew nodded, more sympathy flooding his expression. "I didn't know you still thought about him."

Green eyes closed. "I'm not still hung up on him, trust me. He and Feliciano are like the model for the perfect couple, and I honestly couldn't imagine the two of them with anyone else but each other. Like, the fact that either of them dated before getting together is surreal, even if I know that Ludwig and I were that close." He shook his head. "No, it's more like I'm just worried about letting myself get that involved with someone who could turn out to be a lost cause. It was nice while it lasted, though, so I can't complain much." He grinned. "Feliciano lets me tease him still, since he turns bright red and that kid loves watching his boyfriend blush."

"They are really cute," Matthew agreed. "It was funny because Gilbert apparently realised this before they did and had spent the better part of two years trying to stick them together." He shrugged. "But think about it, now you can have my cousin, if he'll stop acting like man whore."

"Mm," Arthur agreed, looking down at the photo. "Yes, what I would give to see him act like he can be loyal to something other than his dick for five minutes." Matthew giggled, and he

smiled at the Canadian. “Hey, you don’t think you could possibly figure out if he’s interested in anyone, could you?”

Violet eyes filled with excitement. “Oh, you bet I can!”

“Francis!”

He paused in the hallway at the sound of his name, reaching in his pocket to turn down his music. Looking back, he noticed that his cousin was running towards him, holding a rose in his fist as he tried to catch up. A smile found its way to the Frenchman’s face, recognising the same rose as one that Gilbert had carried around this morning. At first he had been nervous about letting the guitarist around his shy and often forgotten cousin, knowing Gilbert had a thing for them, but his friend had pulled through and acted like a real gentleman.

Now, if only I could get my gentleman to figure out where he stands for once in his life. I’m not sure how much more of this I can take.

What had started out as a hazing prank had escalated into feelings that Francis had no desire to truly acknowledge, and he was currently frustrated with the position his heart had put him in. After all, it had cursed him to this fate of wanting a bitter little Englishman who had no desire to even be around him half the time and spent what little part of the day with him at least five feet apart. He avoided Francis like the plague at school and only talked to him when they ended up together by chance. It was really annoying.

To say he was pissed at his advances being rejected was an understatement. He wasn’t used to failing at getting who he wanted, and he wanted Arthur more than people in Hell wanted ice water- or warm drinks, if one were to listen to Matthias or Lukas. However, the teen ran from him every time like a scared little rabbit.

His mind turned the panicked look on Arthur’s face from the weekend. He’d seen the moment when something close to sorrow flashed through those green eyes, and then they’d quickly flashed to anger as he shoved Francis away. So, Francis had let him go, despair twisting in his heart as he wondered what he had to do to get through to the boy. He looked over at the rose clutched in his cousin’s hand and wondered if perhaps he needed to step up his game.

As if thinking about him had conjured the Brit, Francis saw streaks of red walk out of the library, carrying a few classics like *Paradise Lost* and *Great Expectations* under his arm. He had always enjoyed seeing the lovely, vivid red nestled amongst the blonde; out of all the colours that he’d tried over the time Francis knew him, it was the Frenchman’s favourite. He would love to take a strand or two between his fingers, playing with the downy locks and watch as the teen’s face turned as red as his hair. He had never thought that any hair but his own could be sexy, but Arthur had changed his perspective on a few things already.

The boy turned off into classroom, and Francis could hear his friend Liz talking enthusiastically. He moved to follow the blonde, but Matthew grabbed his sleeve, shaking his head. He pressed a finger to his lips, and Francis soon saw why he had been stopped.

After a moment of still quiet, he heard the first hesitant plucking of a guitar, but it didn't sound like Emily. The chords were smoother, easier and slowed the beat of his racing heart in his chest. Blue eyes looked into violet, and his cousin smiled with a nod. It was Arthur playing, all right, and he heard the quiet sound of a girl singing inside the room, voice not timid but still subdued. It took him a moment to recognise the song, but when he did, a huge smile broke out on his face.

"Hold me close and hold me fast...

This magic spell you cast

This is la vie en rose..."

That's Liz singing, he thought numbly, wondering why the two of them were practicing when neither of them were in a band or a group together. Sure, Elizabeta had a beautiful voice, but as far as Francis knew, she didn't work with people for anything more than a one-time gig, and she preferred to do covers rather than anything original. However, he couldn't imagine why Arthur was playing the acoustic guitar for her.

"I hear they're working on something together," Matthew murmured quietly, keeping his voice as low as possible so as not to disturb the artists practicing in the empty choir room.

"Arthur told me it's a surprise."

Is this why he won't join the band? Because him and Liz already have something in the works? What if he never decides to join? Will I just be chasing after him without any hope? How could Liz do this to me? She knew how much getting Arthur to play with us means to me.

Suddenly, that warm feeling poisoned him, and his stomach churned sickly in his gut. His head felt light, like he'd stood up too fast, and Matthew had to grab his arm again so that he could steady him. Francis shook his head with a small smile. After all, he couldn't worry his adorable little cousin, who was his only informant as to what was going on in Arthur's world.

"Sorry, *cher*, I just need a moment," he apologised, making his way over to the way and sliding down the cool surface. His head was still racing, heart beating uncomfortably in his chest as the notes flowed languidly out into the hallway, taunting him. Perhaps he could ask her about it later, get the whole story, and then politely tell her to back away from his little Brit. After all, as much as the girl probably admired the guitarist, the blonde had called dibs the first night they met. Everyone knew that.

"Hey, Francis, let's go on ahead, okay?" Matthew said softly, offering him an arm to hold onto so that his cousin wouldn't faint or lose his balance. After all, as vain as the Frenchman was, it would be disastrous if he fell and bruised his face or something. "I'll drive, if you want."

"Bon, that would be splendid. Please, and you can call Al to take you home."

The Canadian helped his cousin out to the student parking lot, debating in his head whether or not to bring up the discussion in Art or not. After all, he had sworn on all he held dear that Francis wouldn't find out through him by any means, but the blonde just seemed to be so distraught, no doubt thinking that Arthur and Elizabeta were planning to get together while

Francis's back was turned. He'd only seen that look on his face when he had found out an old girlfriend of his, Joan, was moving back to France.

It was devastation.

Honestly, Matthew knew his cousin was being melodramatic. After all, it didn't take much to see that Elizabetha and Arthur couldn't see each other as anything but mates, but in the haze that was Francis's overactive imagination, they were secret lovers that were working together on a song. That was just how the older boy worked when he was pining after someone. And Matthew had no issues when it came time to snap him back into shape.

As they approached the small smart car that they shared, Matthew let his cousin go and rolled his eyes, getting a wounded look. He shook his head. "Seriously, Francis, don't tell me you're entertaining thoughts of Liz and Arthur hooking up. Those two are practically family! They're closer than Alfred and I!"

"Well, why else would he agree to work with her when he knows that he can join our band instead? There had to be something else behind it!" He dragged a hand over his gorgeous face and wept a little. "I almost had him, too! You should've seen how close he was to letting me kiss him this weekend. His green eyes kept shooting me longing looks, practically begging me to come to him."

"Maybe him and Elizabetha are working together for a moment because her offer doesn't come with any terms and conditions?" Matthew shot back, getting irritated. "After all, he's not someone who just gives himself to people for no reason, and if she said he could work with her without having to kiss her or anything else, then he figured that was the better deal." Violet eyes narrowed. "And if you think you're going to get snog all over the interior of the car, you thought wrong. You're being a drama queen, honestly."

"Matthew, *et tu?*" Francis asked, looking utterly betrayed. Matthew sighed, massaging his temples. There went the warm fuzzy feeling he'd been living off of since Gilbert had given him the rose during their lunch period. The Canadian took a moment to reflect on that feeling, remembering the shy smile on the normally confident boy's face as he murmured the lines of a silly sonnet that he'd no doubt found in their Literature books and thought would be cute to say to his boyfriend on their thirteen month anniversary- a big deal to Gilbert, apparently, who even had the time of day written down when Matthew had agreed to date him.

Boosted by the fuzzy feeling as it resurfaced, Matthew smiled at the pale blonde in front of him and squeezed his hand. "Why don't you just tell Arthur how you feel, dork? After all, you won't have to worry about him and Liz or him and anyone if you just go ahead and admit to him you like him." He made sure that his smile turned more encouraging. "Then, you can kiss him all you want, with or without the entrance for the band."

Blue eyes glazed over slightly as he considered the words. "Hmm, that sounds like a good idea. Why didn't I think of it?" Suddenly he slapped his forehead with his palm, as if coming to a realisation. "Oh, that's right! I *already* confessed! That's why!" He shot his cousin a sour look and grimaced. "The poor virgin boy couldn't pick up a hint if he punched it in the face. Which, he did when I dropped my hints."

“How serious were you about it?” Matthew asked, knowing immediately that his cousin was going to get sheepish. “Exactly. You can’t just leer at him and expect him to see that as being authentic. One does not simply flirt with Arthur; you must be extremely blunt and straightforward about it.”

“And how do I do that?” Matthew almost glared, sarcastic words already prepared, but he saw the genuine plea in those crystal depths and realised he was being completely solemn.

He doesn't know how? Honey-Lips-Bonnefoy actually can't figure out how to woo his crush without using meaningless flirtations? And he's asking me? Hell must either be frozen over or burning hot right now.

Sighing and thinking quickly about his answer, Matthew just nodded and made his way to the car. “You buy me dinner, and I’ll tell you as we’re driving. Hop in, though, because my adorkable boyfriend is planning on taking me to a movie tonight.”

Francis grinned and hurried over to the smart car, making Matthew shake his head in amazement that this guy was related to him. Though, he was also related to Alfred, so perhaps it wasn’t so surprising. Nonetheless, he silently added a cup of coffee to the list of things he would be ordering when they stopped since there was no way he would last the night without it at this rate.

Chapter End Notes

Translation Notes (I shouldn't need to with these, but I will):

French

Lapin/Mon lapin: Rabbit/My rabbit

Amour: Love

Mes amis: My friends

Maman and Papa: Mom and Dad

La Vie en Rose: Life in Pink or Life Through Rose-Colored Glasses- Popular song by Edith Piaf, written in 1945

Cher: Darling

Bon: Good/Right/etc

Spanish

Siesta: Nap

Amigo: Friend

British

Poof: Gay person (typically derogatory)

Canadian

Timmies: Tim Hortons (a superior Starbucks that is found in Canada)

Latin

Et tu: And you? (allusions to Shakespeare for the win)

Notes:

I know Toris (Lithuania) is not typically depicted as being homophobic- it's typically the opposite- but Lithuania is actually one of the most homophobic countries in the world, rivalling Russia with its anti-gay laws.

Also, the taste in music might be different for a lot of people, but when I think British Punk, I think the stuff from like the 80s that was seedy and raw and beautiful. If you didn't recognise any of the bands, I recommend them.^^

~Rose

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

In which everything becomes more sexual??

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Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Arthur sat back down on his bed with a mug with Earl Grey and a soda for Matthew, who sat down the pencil and pad he had been scribbling words and phrases in for a bit in an effort to help the Bad Touch Trio write new songs. The poor boys had issues with rhyming, and the Canadian liked to help his boyfriend, cousin, and friend in whatever ways he could. Arthur had offered to play the guitar parts that the boys *had* figured out, so they met up at the Brit's home and had hung out ever since school let out.

"Do you think that their gig this Saturday will go well?" Matthew asked as he opened the can. He took a long draught of the sweet liquid, smiling softly to himself before wiping his mouth on his ragged flannel sleeve. "I don't want poor Gil to come home drying again because they didn't cheer on his awesomeness like he expected them to," he added for explanation, surprisingly not being sarcastic or teasing when it came to the dreaded A-word that Gilbert had a tendency to sometimes overuse when either moping to getting too cocky. Unlike a lot of people, Matt was really good at just accepting the pale boy for who he was rather than trying to mock him for his habits. Though, Arthur couldn't say that he was *too* gobsmacked, if he were being honest, since Matthew wasn't really a person who judged people too harshly.

"I think, if they have a good enough set, then they should blow them away," Arthur replied truthfully, picking up Emily and picking a few chords along her sweet strings and breathing easier as she filled the room. He took a sip of the still hot tea and let it further relax him. "After all, they've got a good sound going on, and their lyrics are something that a lot of people to relate to when they go to these events." He pointed to a store bought CD case that sat next to his stereo and smirked. "I've got their little mix tape, so that's got to say something. I typically just ignore the CDs that those posers put out near the front while they're performing, but there it is."

"Yeah, their CDs do really well, actually. As the person who deals with all their finances, I can say for certain that they aren't in the red on that front." Matthew smiled sheepishly. "I try to promote them as best as possible so that I can give Gil and them some good news on the

way home. That, and my naturally cute exterior is really good for hiding the ferocious beast of a salesman I can be when I want to,” he added with an innocent grin.

His friend had to laugh. “Yes, I know all about that, remember? It was you I bought the CD from, even though I had no intentions of doing so with those airheads so close to the table.” Arthur shook his head, his memory conjuring up Francis’s satisfied smirk when he had seen that Arthur held the burned CD with his wallet. Of course, the look hadn’t lasted long after the Brit wiped it off his smug face, but they hadn’t let it go for a month. Arthur suddenly looked at Matthew, stopping his fingers from their subconscious strumming. “Hey, when is the next one coming out? I mean, they have quite a few songs under their belt now, and they can fill the rest of the space with covers like they did with the last album.”

The bespectacled boy chuckled nervously. “Um, I still want to sell this last batch that I made a couple weeks ago. Besides, Gilbert and Antonio were hoping to wait until you came on before releasing anything else. A lot of people commented that there was ‘something missing,’ and they all know that that’s probably you and Emily.”

His mouth formed a small “Oh,” and he looked down at his boots with a guilty frown. Arthur had no idea they wanted him that much. Besides Francis, the topic of him joining didn’t come up as often as one would expect. Perhaps they had left the task up to the Frenchman, expecting him to convince the blonde to come to the dark side with them, and Arthur hadn’t realised. He sipped the tea thoughtfully and silently mulled over the possibility of convincing Matthew to kiss him or let Gil do it.

“So, you and your acoustic have been getting around, huh? Cheating on Emily and me, are you?” Matthew teased, but the words were spoken in a way that Arthur knew he was searching for answers as he stared straight into his friend’s green eyes. He is confused at first as to what he’s talking about, but then he realises that Matthew must’ve heard him and Liz practicing the other day.

“Oh! That!” He rubbed his neck with a little chuckle. “Yeah, Elizabeta and I are going to work together for just a little bit. It’s nothing permanent, and nor do we plan on possibly going further after this, but it’s just kind of a one show deal.” Violet eyes told him that he should start clarifying, and he sighed quietly. “Fine, whatever, I’ll ruin the surprise, but you can’t tell a soul about this or else I’ll kill you and all your precious stuffed polar bears.”

“You fiend!” Matthew gasped, grabbing at his heart, even as a playful smile soon threatened to ruin the horrified expression. “Not my darling Kumas!”

“Yes! All of your darling Kumas will be sliced and diced with the help of Alfred if you let this loose.” He set Emily down on the bed and held Matthew’s hands in his. He stared deep in his friend’s eyes, leaning in slowly so that their foreheads touched. Green and violet stared unblinking at each other and blocked out the smirks on both their lips. If they weren’t close enough to be practically brothers, one would think Arthur was about to kiss him.

Still, his chapped lips brushed up against the Canadian’s as he whispered in a voice that was exaggeratingly sorrowful, “Mattie, I have sold my soul to the talent assembly with Liz.”

Matthew shoved him, and Arthur's back hit the surface of the bed as he cackled. A groan left the upright boy and he shook his head. "You're lucky I still like you, Kirkland, or else we *so* wouldn't be all cool and gay together."

"Oh, you know you're still the best, or else why would I feel comfortable messing with you like I do?" Arthur slightly sobered, sitting up and picking up his tea. "But, yes, that is why Liz and I were in the classroom. She wanted to be in the talent show and wow Roderich to show him that she could appreciate music just as much as him, the pretentious bastard." He shook his head. "I don't understand why she's interested in that guy or why he has to act like her covers on Youtube aren't good just because they're not some song from like an opera or something."

Matthew sighed and looked out the window, no doubt looking at the nest of birds that had decided to settle in the tree near Arthur's room. "Well, we can't help her now. After all, Roderich is always going to be a pretentious asshole, and Liz is always going to be drawn to that one good side of him. I'm assuming that's why you two are going with a slow classic then- because she thinks he'll appreciate it more?"

"Yeah, and I want her to be happy. If he makes her happy to some extent, then I'll help her however I can." He flashed a sly grin over at the boy beside him. "At least Gilbert woke up and smelled the rainbow, or else he'd still be chasing her round and round."

"Pfft. Gil was just chasing ladies because he was still overly bent on being the 'most awesome guy to walk the face of the earth,'" Matthew said dryly, rolling his eyes. "He said that the hero always gets the girl, not the guy, so he thought that he was supposed to be into girls."

"Thank goodness you have Alfred for a brother, or you would've had no idea how to deal with that, I bet." Matthew nodded, closing his eyes as he obviously recalled that his brother and boyfriend seemed to be cut from the same strip of cloth. However, while Alfred gave him a headache, Gilbert was good at sensing his boyfriend was getting tired of the goofing around and could act serious. Arthur had witnessed multiple occasions when Matthew had started to frown and looked uncomfortable in the loud and heavy atmosphere of the clubs and Gilbert had told the group that him and his "awesome Birdy were going home because too much exposure to lesser beings can get tiring."

"I love both of them to death," he murmured softly, a smile playing at his lips. "And I plan to love them to death."

They sat in silence for a bit before Arthur asked gently, "Are you and Gil that serious?" He saw the uncertainty in those violet eyes, and he fixed the question. "Do you *want* to be that serious?"

That got him an immediate nod. "Yes. Every time I'm near him, even when he gets slightly annoying, I couldn't imagine anyone else to spend the rest of my life with. I feel like I can let loose with him and let go of all that anxiety I feel at school. He doesn't forget me for a second when we're together, and he's sweet enough to send me texts during class just to say that he loves me." He smiled sweetly, and Arthur's heart ached looking at the pure joy in his

friend's eyes. He had met Matthew around the same time as everyone else, but he still felt like the boy had been with him most of his life and was almost like a brother.

It was no secret that Matthew wasn't really looked after a lot in classes. Arthur sometimes even forgot he shared Art class with his friend unless he looked over and saw him or they talked, but that was mainly because he forgot about a lot of things when he was concentrating. He was right, however, in saying that Gilbert seemed to be the only one who never forgot about him; he would ask after him if he was absent, would notice if the boy didn't get lunch or breakfast, and even went out of his way to keep from abandoning him at parties. It was pretty sweet of him, but they were madly in love so it wasn't surprising.

"Well, have you talked with him about possibly moving to the next step after you two graduate?" Arthur asked, making sure not to stare at the flushing boy. "I'm sure he's probably thought about it a thousand times but didn't want to push it on you. He's always scared that he's keeping you from doing things you love."

"I know. For some reason, he has yet to realise we are right beside a university and going to classes and being with him full time wouldn't be that difficult. Like, we mentioned moving in together a couple of months ago, and he got all worried about whether or not that would be too stressful on me or would deter me from going to school." He grinned coyly before adding, "Though, I *might* be deterred from going some days, what with us sharing the same bed then."

Arthur groaned and covered his ears. "No! I don't want to hear about the wild sex my two friends are having. It's bad enough I have to hear it from that oaf; I don't need it on both sides."

Matthew laughed, actually snorting when he struggled to breathe. "Be careful talking about my oaf there, Kirkland." He suddenly paused and dug in his pocket. His phone was vibrating, signalling he had an incoming call, and the Canadian smiled brightly. "Looks like you can summon him now." He tapped the screen and pressed the phone to his ear. "Hey, babe." He listened for a moment before turning bright red. He glanced at Arthur before turning away from him. In a quiet voice, he murmured, "Gil, watch it; I'm over at Art's house and you're making me turn red." Gilbert said something else, and Arthur saw his friend's ears flush heavily as well as what little of his neck was visible. "Not if you keep that up, I don't," he warned his boyfriend in a high-pitched voice. More talking on the other end, and he sighed with a tiny chuckle. "Okay, okay, calm down, sweetie. I was just joking. Where do *you* want to go?... The movies? Again?... Oh! Oh, well, that make sense. No, no, no. We can go see it again if you want. I noticed that you had really enjoyed it, and I liked it a lot."

After some more murmuring and a lovey-dovey goodbye, Matthew hung up and fell back on the bed, nearly smashing into Arthur. He let his phone fall onto the blankets and smiled. "Gil and I are going to the movies to see that movie again."

"Dear god, tell me you're not going to see that stupid sex movie," Arthur groaned, disgust already boiling in his gut. "Those books have to be the worst thing to come out of Northern America since the vampire crap, and I hate books that glorify abuse and make it look appealing to people who have no idea what they're getting into."

“Don’t worry, Arthur. You couldn’t pay me to see that crap.” He shook his head to expel the thought before giving a shy smile. “No, we want to go see the new superhero movie. After all, hot men in spandex have always been a mutual interest we have, and Gilbert likes it when he can watch things blow up.”

“Ah, well, I can see that. *That* side of America is one I would very much enjoy getting a chance to meet.” Arthur picked up Emily and adjusted the strings before setting her back in her case. It seemed like they were done going over music, and he didn’t want to risk her getting damaged by *anything*. “So, are you two going this Friday? Or will it be after the gig?”

“After the gig. He’s usually really tired on Fridays, the poor dear.” Matthew melted a bit, no doubt picturing Gilbert in some cute little sleepy mood. He caught himself, cheeks dusted with pink, and smiled. “When they finish a performance, he’s usually jazzed up on adrenaline and he’s much more fun to hang out with.”

“Funny,” Arthur mused, mind stuttering to the last time they performed. “It seems like Francis is the exact opposite. All of his parties end up on Fridays or Sundays, and he’s much more out of it after a performance. He’s less talkative and will just stand there instead of trying to flirt too much.”

“Yes, I’ve noticed,” the Canadian stated with a slight smirk. “You must be watching him a lot to pick up that trend. Or perhaps you just spend a lot of time with him after he gets off-stage.”

He felt hot and cold, and suddenly he needed a sip of his cooling tea to keep himself busy as he forced himself to calm down. Arthur knew he was being stupid for freaking out all the time over Francis, especially since this was the only thing that made him nervous, but he couldn’t help it. A part of him was still very scared about what that idiot would do if he found out that his “little green-eyed Brit” actually liked him, and Matthew- Francis’s cousin- being fully aware that he was interested in him made him worried that it would just slip out.

Matthew must’ve noticed his turmoil because he pouted. “What? Are you still afraid I’m going to tell Francis? Don’t you trust me more than that?” Arthur opened his mouth to assure him that he, in fact, trusted Matt with his very life, but the blonde cut him off. “Don’t worry about it, Arthur. Your secret is safe with me. As much of a prat as he’s acting like lately, I’m not sure if he deserves to know that people are sexually attracted to him.”

Arthur spluttered, the word “sexually” sparking a whole flurry of images in his head. From the titbits he’d heard from people at clubs and parties, the Frenchman lived up to the stereotype about the French being excellent lovers, and he could very well imagine what he could do to test that theory. He covered his face with his teacup and tried to force the blush down as it crept up his neck. Matthew, being the saint he was, ignored it this time and patted him on the back.

“I’m sure you can go that far when you want to.” He looked Arthur dead in the eyes and refused to let him look away. “But you know you have to at least start, right? Even if right now isn’t the right time, you can’t just keep shoving these feelings away until you can convince even yourself that all you want to do with that goof is pound him in a pulp.” Matthew took a sip of his soda and gave him a quizzical look. “You’re an Englishman! Aren’t

you people supposed to be sexy? What happened to the Victorian romantic era? Grow a pair!”

“I can assure you that they are well and fully grown,” Arthur retorted, laughing nonetheless. “In fact, if Francis can’t compare, he might find himself bottoming for once.”

Unfortunately, he had timed that right as Matt had taken another sip, and the poor boy choked for a second. Arthur thumped him on the back, pulling his arms up so that he could open his airways, and Matthew struggled to breathe for a bit. After a few tense moments, Matthew took another sip of his soda to calm his breathing and glared without much heat at Arthur. Finally, he just sighed and shook his head.

“Well, if you can make Francis choke like you just made me, then maybe you *should* top,” he said nonchalantly. Arthur gaped at him for a moment before tackling him, knocking soda all over the bed, but he was more focused on choking his friend once more- striving to kill this time.

He sat at a table near the back of the club, nursing a beer and watching with a smile as Francis strutting around the stage. His voice was melodic, soothing even, and made his heart ache even more as the flamboyant blonde blew a kiss to a crowd of girls at a table across the room. Thankfully, he hadn’t noticed that Arthur was there yet, and it would stay that way. He’d only gone because he wanted to be supportive of Gilbert and had tagged along with Matthew on the way over.

Belt up, Kirkland. You know you came to see that hot mess on stage, a little voice nagged him, obviously disgusted with the way he was lying to himself. You came because Francis posted pictures of himself online earlier today of what he was going to be wearing to get everyone’s opinion. Well, you came after you came a couple of times.

Arthur flushed at the memory and sipped his beer once more. If he played his cards smart, he could get just intoxicated enough to play it off as a drunk blush and not a “you’re-way-too-hot-to-be-clad-in-tight-clothes” blush. Boy, were they tight- skinny jeans hugging curves and not even stopping Francis from doing his normal provocative moves that he liked. He only wore a black tank top over that, and his fingernails were painted emerald to match the nearly illegal jeans. He ran them down his chest as he murmured hot phrases into the microphone and made even the straightest man a little hard.

This sucks, Arthur almost grumbled, but he settled with staring and *not* touching himself. His fingers ran through his hair, keeping it off his face as the temperature in the room picked up. Between the bodies mingling and giving off heat, his blush, and the alcohol warming his veins, he was starting to regret choosing a long-sleeved tee. It had threatened to rain later in the night when he would be walking home, and he had thought it would be better to be safe than sorry. Now he was safe from the rain but definitely not from the sweat that causing the warm material to cling to his skin.

The song ended, and he cheered as he should, mindful to curb his enthusiasm so that a pair of blue eyes didn’t find him. As much as Francis liked to tease girls from the stage, the prat had

jumped down before to practically grind in Arthur's lap. Everyone had thought it was funny, and it had left him with a little issue that had been awkward to find a way to get rid of. By the way Francis was acting, he was sure to try again should he find Arthur.

Antonio and Gilbert started a new song, switching to one of the Ramones songs that they liked to cover. Francis didn't sound at all like the British bands he tried to mimic but didn't struggle finding a sound that at least sounded good. Arthur consoled himself with the reminder that they sang plenty of their own songs to make up for their inability to accurately mirror their idols and smiled as he remembered Matthew's promise of a new album coming soon. The Frenchman's voice was enough to help him calm down on nights when his mind was racing too much to fall asleep.

However, part of him wished for the real thing on nights when he just needed to de-stress. His mother told him he had the tendency to think too much, to mull things over and over in his head, and it kept him from sleeping at night. He'd tried the American method- sleep aids- but had eventually settled on Francis's soothing voice and the loud discord of the Bad Touch Trio. He had never told anyone, knowing it spoke too much about him, and he preferred to keep it in rather than spilling his secrets like water all over the floor- unable to completely be collected and restored to the same containment as before and forever spread across the tile.

Francis was an aggravating, imminent reality. After all, it seemed like he was just dancing around the situation for pride's sake, and he knew that this wouldn't be able to hold for long unless he wanted the singer to move on without him and leave him in the ditch as he found a girl or boy who he liked and willingly liked him back. Arthur wasn't sure if he could lose someone again like he lost Ludwig, as happy as he was for the German boy. But this time, if the worst thing happened, he wouldn't be able to be happy for Francis. After all, as much as he had lusted after Ludwig, they hadn't quite clicked as easily as he and Francis did. Talking had been awkward; there hadn't been a state of relaxation for a moment.

As difficult as their relationship was at times, the main issue between him and Arthur seemed to be some level of sexual frustration on Arthur's part that spilled over into their conversations and made him tense and oversensitive around the flamboyant teen. So he pushed him away, avoided him, and kept himself safe from that stress, only to go home and hate himself for not stepping up and being honest.

"You look like a loser sitting here by yourself," a voice said from his left, and he looked up to see Liz grinning down at him. "That beer not working for you, babe? Need something a little stronger?"

Arthur was shocked out of a loud laugh. "Knowing you, stronger would put me on the floor, murmuring like a madman. No, this one is good enough for me." He eyed the cup in her hand suspiciously. "Why? What noxious mixture are you sipping on?"

"Rum and coke," she said innocently, but she smirked in a way that worried the blonde. "Wanna try some?"

"No. Knowing you, it's ninety-eight-percent rum and two-percent coke. I'll take a sip then I'll be waking up."

“Oh, Arthur, you’re such a light weight. Can’t you hold your liquor any better than that?” She paused and tapped her lip with a black-tipped finger. “Though, I *did* ask him for the strongest rum he had behind the counter. I don’t like dealing with assholes without some form of a buzz.”

“I’m not one of those assholes, right, sweetie?” he asked, grinning at her playfully. “I’d hate to be the one to drive you to drink.”

“Please, don’t worry about me. The only thing driving me to drink is knowing that I can’t get my hands on a pair of jeans like Francis’s. Could you imagine how my little dork of a boyfriend would react if I was zipped up in a pair of those? The only thing classical piece running through his mind will be the choral climax of Ode to Joy.”

“He’d faint,” Arthur agreed, snickering. “Have you even worn anything tighter than a skirt around him?”

“Ha, ha,” she replied dryly. “I’ll have you know that he has seen me in clothes like this before and couldn’t speak for minutes.” She gestured to the red, shimmery skinny jeans that clung to her hips and the mesh shirt that covered a black, lacy bra. He hadn’t really noticed, not worried about how much skin his best friend was showing, but he was sure uptight Roderich would’ve been all hot and bothered over seeing a woman’s waist for the first time in his life.

“How big was the tent in his pants?” he asked with a sly smile, gesturing for her to sit down. She slid into the seat across from him and leaned across the table’s surface.

“Big enough I offered to take care of it for him,” she replied with a proud look on her face. Arthur sniggered, trying not to spit beer, and imagined the look on that idiot’s face after *that*. “He turned me down, but there’s only so many times you can jerk off to Mozart before you want a girl’s touch, if you know what I mean.”

“No offense, Liz, but I’m perfectly fine not having a woman’s touch. I’d rather someone who’s got his own to experiment with.” He winked, and she cackled. “But you help your boyfriend with his problems whenever you two can agree.”

The song ended, and they clapped politely, looking at the band as they stood onstage. Francis announced they had two more before they were going home- beauty needs sleep- and leaving them to the DJ that was scheduled to take over at eleven. Elizabeta beamed when Francis gestured over at her. Apparently that was her job.

However, he then looked over at who she was sitting with and saw Arthur. Biting back a curse at the slow grin that reached those blue eyes, Arthur blushed and turned back to his beer. The music started again, easing into a slower song to relax the pumped up mood. Liz grabbed Arthur’s hand and dragged him towards the dance floor.

“Love, our drinks!” he objected, looking back wistfully at the beer that was calling his name. “Look away, throw away, remember?”

“Eh, I drank most of mine, and I need to be mostly sober for my job. Besides, you have to walk home, right? Can’t be sloshed if you’re walking alone. Someone’ll snatch up that sweet

ass, and I'll miss out." She grabbed his butt for emphasis, and he let out a rather unmanly squeak that made her chuckle. "I promise I'll buy you one next time."

"You better." With that promise, he spun her, switching gears to the basic steps that he knew for slow dances. They danced like a bunch of fools, acting too handsy but not awkwardly. After all, they were too close of friends to have and resignation for that, and they both knew Arthur was too gay for it to be anything other than some dirty dancing between friends.

As they danced, however, he could feel a pair of eyes on him. He glanced briefly at Francis just to confirm and saw indeed that the blonde was staring at them. There was something running through the singer's mind as his lips formed words of reverence and love, and Arthur couldn't decipher what it was. After all, it wasn't anything like satisfaction or even jealousy, since he had seen both of those on the Frenchman's face before. However, he couldn't think of what else the oaf could be thinking about.

"Hey, you bitch, you're dancing with me," Liz joked, noticing Arthur glancing away repeatedly. "Don't tell me you're gawking at other women." She pouted, but it didn't reach the mischief in her eyes.

"You know you're the only girl I could love, besides my mum," he assured, and she giggled. "But, no, it's nothing, sweetie. Just, thinking about stuff is all."

"Oh? Do tell. I like to talk about stuff. Is there some hot guy checking us out, wishing he could get in your pants or mine?"

"Well, it's more like there's a hot guy whose pants I would like to leap into," he told her truthfully as he spun her. "And, no, I'm not telling you who. You can wait until I make my move then fawn over us like the little yaoi lover you are."

"Guilty as charged," she admitted, grinning without any shame. "Fine, I'll leave you alone, but you better actually make a move soon or else Mama Liz will be *very* pissed off." She really did pout. "I want you to be happy, Arty, you know that. And you need to get laid, too. Getting laid is so much fun."

"Mm, well, I'm sure those will go hand in hand, though I might have to bottom." He grimaced. "That will suck if it goes wrong, but I guess you'll always bottom so I'm in good company, huh?"

"It's only bottoming when you're with a man," she replied with a smirk. His mouth dropped open on a shocked laugh, and she joined him. "Yes, my dear Arthur, I have practiced homosexual relations as well, and it is *so* worth going to hell for."

"Scandalous," he gasped, dipping her. "Whatever will become of hell if we are *both* sent to dwell there for all eternity?"

She took the bait. "It'll go to hell in a handbasket," she chirped.

The song ended and immediately slipped into something more face paced. He continued to dance with her, but it became more playful grinding than anything considered remotely

romantic. All the while, he could feel those unreadable blue eyes watching him. It pissed him off, but it also encouraged him to move as sensuously as possible. After all, as his hand crept dangerously low on his own body, he hoped it made Francis just slightly horny. Elizabetha slapped him playfully, but she still licked her lips like a child expecting a treat.

“Fuck you,” she spat without any heat. “You can’t do that when you don’t have a straight bone in your body. It’s not nice to tease, babe!”

“Oh, shut it, I’m not putting on anything for you,” he murmured in a conspirator’s tone. He watched the understanding dawn in her eyes and winked at his friend. However, as he did so, he was starting to sweat too much to be attractive anymore. “Hey, keep yourself safe, okay? I’m off to get a drink before I collapse. Dying of a heat stroke isn’t sexy.”

“It is not.” She gave a flirtatious salute. “Well, Captain Kirkland, I’ll see you after you hydrate yourself. Get some water, you loser, not some holy water. Lord knows that won’t truly help you.”

He saluted back before making his way to the bar. The man behind the counter smiled at him, no doubt recognising him as someone who tipped well. He slapped a five on the surface and gave him a shaky grin. “Get me some of that water before I become more hot than mess.”

The guy laughed and complied, handing him a bottle of water and taking the money. “Yeah, dancing like that is sure to drain your pretty little self.”

“Oi, hands above the bar,” he retorted with a grin. “Sorry, Matthias, but I’m already holding out for someone. Besides, what would Lukas think, hearing you talk like that?”

“Pfft, I’m just joking. The only bitter boy for me is my Norge, and he knows it.” He raised a blonde eyebrow at his customer, the first statement obviously just sinking in. “Oh, you got your eye on someone. Anyone I would know?”

“Hard not to, but I’d rather not jinx myself. After all, if you tell people what you wished for, it won’t come true.” He took a long drink of the water and exhaled. “Holy shit, that girl can drain you. You ever danced with Liz before?”

“No, but I’m sure just by watching her that it’s not for the faint of heart.” He pointed to way the brunette was moving by herself, eyes closed as she wiggled her hips. Arthur smirked, knowing that she could have her pick with the way she danced. “Who’s she with right now?”

“Technically Roderich, but that dude’s such a stiff that they really only hang out. They didn’t end up kissing until about a month in. Poor girl’s so frustrated she’s probably going to end up cornering his ass one day.” He looked up to the sky. “God help that idiot when she does.”

“Got that right.” Matthias went to assist another customer before coming back. “So, you staying until closing again or are you going home early?”

“Probably going to head home early. Mum’s been worried about me coming home so late, what with that rapist on the loose. She’s cool with me doing what I want as long as I’m responsible, but it doesn’t matter how responsible I am if she’s scared someone’ll grab me.”

“Yeah, Lukas has been worried about that, too. He’s also been nervous about heading too close to town since that trans boy got sent to the hospital two weeks ago.” He frowned. “I don’t know what happened to him exactly, but a lot of us have been careful to avoid walking around alone.”

Green eyes widened. “Huh, well, that’s fucked up. I’ll probably take the long way home, then. I don’t wanna deal with some little jerks just because they think beating up anyone different will get them far in life.”

“I’d walk home with someone if I were you,” Matthias said, frowning a bit. “Just to be safe.”

A hand came to rest on Arthur’s side, and he jumped. Whipping around, he looked right into a pair of blue eyes. Francis smiled easily before looking behind him at Matthias. “Get me and him a drink. Whatever you think would be good to unwind.”

“Got it, man.” And the bartender went to work, leaving Arthur to be eased into a bar stool. He glared lightly at the teen who slid into the seat beside him.

“Aren’t you tired?” he asked, trying not to pay attention to the way the boy’s shirt clung to the barely-there muscles under the fabric. “After all, you’ve been singing for over an hour.”

“Ah, but what type of man would I be if I didn’t come visit my *lapin*?” His hand came to rest on the back of Arthur’s neck, rubbing gently into the muscle there. He forced himself to tense at the touch, to act like he was offended by it, but Matthias’s return saved him. He scooted away from Francis’s hand and towards his drink.

“You did well tonight, Francis,” the bartender complimented. “I know I can’t sing for so long; my beautiful voice starts to get tired after a few songs.” He smirked and nodded at them. “Consider those on the house, my man. I don’t wanna disrespect all the business you guys brought in here.”

“*Merci*, Matthias. It means a lot.” He slipped money in the tip jar and rested the hand not holding the drink on the small of Arthur’s back, lightly enough that it was barely noticeable except to the tense blonde whose whole body was on alert for any touch from Francis. He wanted to lean into the touch, wanted Francis to touch more than his back, but he was scared-scared that he would use him for a hot second just like he used every other girl or guy who showed interested in him and got their heart broke.

So, he shied away from his touch and perched as far away from him on the stool as possible and took another sip of his beer. He felt the other blonde tense, but then his ears were full of laughter. The hand rested on the seat behind him, thumb brushing against the fabric of his jeans. He relaxed a little, glad that Francis seemed to content to just leave it at that instead of his typical groping. The drink didn’t help calm his nerves as much as he would’ve liked, but he couldn’t complain too much when he considered the fact that he was normally frustrated to the point that he wanted to punch the Frenchman in the face for having the audacity to wave that pretty face in front of him when he couldn’t do anything about it.

“Hey, Francis, are you driving home today?” Matthias asked, wiping a rag across the surface of the bar and levelled a frown at him. “Because I can’t let you have too many of those if you

are.”

“*Non*, but thank you, my friend, for your concern. Toni needed my car to take Lovino out to the dinner in the city, so I will be walking home.” His hand smoothed over the seat behind Arthur, sliding back and forth but still avoiding contact with his ass. “Which means that I can be charmed by your ‘mug’ all night.”

“Oh, stop, Fran, you’ll make me blush,” the grinning blonde said with a snap of his towel in the flirt’s direction. Arthur wished briefly that he had hit him. He felt rage licked at the very edge of his nerves, smarting at the blatant bedroom eyes that they were shooting each other. Matthias never really meant anything by it, but Francis was probably “falling in love” for the fifth time that week.

Suddenly, Arthur felt uncomfortable, and he finished his drink in one huge draught. Matthias shot him a curious glance, but he ignored him for shooting Francis a glare. He pulled out money for the drink and gave it to the bartender. “I’m going back to the booth to hang out with Liz. Thanks for talking with me, Matthias.”

“No problem, man. Always here to loan an ear. You know me.”

Francis grabbed his arm and didn’t let him go. “Hey, *cher*, why are you in a hurry? The night is young, and there are plenty of drinks here. Stay and have another on me this time.” He gave the green-eyed boy his best convincing pout and batted his painted lashes.

“No, I’ve been away too long as it is. Liz’s probably wondering where I am.” He pulled away and pushed away his feeling of guilt at the flash of hurt that flashed through the astonishing blue. “Oh, go get Gil or something. You’ve got plenty of people to hang out with.”

“But he and Mathieu went on their date! I will be all alone for the rest of the evening. Alone, Arthur! How can you not take pity on me?”

The blonde gritted his teeth. “Because you’re pissing me off.” He rolled his eyes and, though he knew he would regret it, spat out, “Why don’t you go try and get into some guy’s pants for the night. That’s what you usually do, isn’t it?”

Definite pain streaked through those blue eyes, even as Matthias objected with a shocked, “Whoa! Uncalled for, Arty!”

Gritting his teeth, the teen just shook his head to get rid of the guilty thoughts lurking there. He shot Francis a sneer and went over to the booth near the back of the club and away from the bar as his heart raced in his chest. He could see Elizabeta’s grin as she went through the selection of music on the laptop in front of her.

Climbing up to stand beside her, he leaned against the safety rail and looked over her shoulder, knowing it was way too loud to dream of having a decent conversation with her. He just came up to hide from the blonde who was staring at him from across the room. He glanced out of the corner of his eye to see that Francis turned slightly to carry a conversation with the bartender, face missing its usual smirk. He knew that he’d probably hurt the guy’s fragile feelings, but he couldn’t help it.

He was developing a jealous nature, born from seeing green as the idiot flirt joked around with everyone and anyone at every public event. He hated hearing the blonde use any sort of sensual tone with someone but him, and he seemed to have no trouble using it even within earshot of the last person he had flirted with. It seemed like the teen got three new potential partners every Saturday, and it was aggravating to deal with the feelings that came with that.

It's better to start pushing him away now, before this gets too bad, he told himself, knowing that it would be better than falling too hard and hitting the floor when Francis didn't reach out to catch him. *Besides, when's the last time that jerk actually said something worthwhile to you? When was the last time he paid attention to you the entire night instead of whoring himself around the moment you leave to get a drink or to piss? How many times have you watched him flirt with some tramp and go to a back room to have sex? What has he done for you that could even be considered showing serious interest?*

Liz reached behind to grab his hand and squeeze it, something she did when she wanted him to stop brooding. He smiled slightly, touched by her concern and took the seat next to her. Pulling out his cell and pulling up the last chat the two of them had had so that he could actually talk to her, he sent her a quick, **Well, that was a disaster.**

She checked her buzzing phone and then turned to give him a sad smile. **Screw him, then. You're a strong, independent homosexual who don't need no man! XD**

A laugh slipped out, and he ruffled her hair. **Well, I think my hand needs a break from time to time, babe, but thanks.**

Pfft, your hand is on a lifetime contract. I doubt it'll get vacation anytime soon.

Slut

Cocksucker.

Touché. He grinned at the screen and then at her. This was why she was one of his best friends; no matter how upset he was, he could rely on her to turn his thoughts in a happier direction. He rested his head on her shoulder, letting the warmth that radiated from her calm him. Liz was the more motherly person in his life- always tried to cheer him up, called him if he was absent from school to make sure he was okay, forced him to eat even if he wasn't hungry. And she felt like home. She could never truly match his actual mother, but she definitely fit the role well.

Babe, do you have a ride home? he sent her, suddenly remembering Matthias's words earlier.

Yeah, Roddy's coming to pick me up in case I started drinking. Why?

Just heard some shit that made me worried. I don't want anything to happen to you. He scanned over her list of music and closed his eyes as he just let the sound of some of his favourite bands and the chattering of those who had come to let loose drown out all the thoughts that were running through his mind. He blocked out Francis or any thugs, and just tried to relax.

He apparently relaxed too much because suddenly Elizabeta was shaking him awake, frowning slightly as he stirred. She was saying something about it being after one in the morning and unless he had a cot in the back he needed to go on home and get some sleep. He stumbled up, the liquor finally hitting him after a dose of sleep. She supported him down the steps, but then someone else's arm went around him, pulling Arthur's limp arm on their shoulder and helping him walk. He did his best to help them, and Liz called to them to get home safely.

"*Mon dieu*, Arthur, you had too much." The voice was slightly strained, but he couldn't bring himself to look up to check. "You're lucky I stayed to help Matthias clean up or you'd have to walk home this drunk by yourself. Then who knows what would happen to your cute little ass. They might- damn, you're heavy- might decide to snatch you up and eat you for a midnight snack."

"And what will you do, Francis?" he mumbled, walking helping to snap him out of his haze. He shook his head and slapped his own cheeks. "Going to help yourself now?"

A chuckle left the Frenchman. "I might help myself to a bite, if you act that sweet the entire way home." He nipped Arthur's ear for emphasis, and the other blonde growled softly. "Aw, Arthur. If you hate it that much, then I'm sorry," he teased, kissing the place he bit and then continuing to walk. "Well, is your mom going to be mad that you're so late coming home and you're dragging around like this? I know my *Maman* used to almost kill me."

"Mum's a bit more lenient. She wants me to be responsible, of course, but she really doesn't mind if I get tossed one night a week. As long as I'm with mates, I have a safe way home, and I don't make it an everyday habit, it's fine with her and Dad." He smiled to himself. "I'm glad that I have them; it would've been so much harder if they had been like my old friends were and tried to ditch me at the first sign of trouble."

"Then they weren't really friends," Francis murmured, rubbing the shoulder his hand rested on soothingly. "They were dogs who don't deserve you."

"Who *does* deserve me?" Arthur spat without as much venom as he usually used. "*You?*"

They stopped walking, and Francis turned him to face those blue eyes. He searched them for any hint of the pain he'd caused earlier but was happy to see it was gone. Then, he stared at those lips, watching as they moved. "You deserve someone who thinks they can't believe that they deserve you. You deserve someone who can make you their every waking thought."

"But is that you?" Arthur asked, feeling his heart stop as his mind freed itself from its haze. "Is that someone you, Francis?"

Blue eyes darted back and forth between his, searching for a way to answer that no doubt. They were so bright despite the lack of light. The hand that had rested at his shoulder when he was helping Arthur walk slid down to the small of his back and massaged into the tiny bit of fat it found there. A small smile lifted the tips of those beautifully shaped lips, and he realised why so many men and women had agreed to follow Francis into his bed. He ached to kiss him, to taste what other people had so blindly tasted for a night or even just an hour, never knowing how lucky they were until it was gone. Those lips came so close to his own,

and a hope flared in his heart as he realised that perhaps this was it. He wouldn't have to say anything because Francis would say it for him. They could use this as the beginning.

However, all that hope froze in his chest as Francis very quietly whispered, "No, that someone is not me."

Get away from him. Get away before he sees you cry. Oh, god, Arthur Kirkland, don't you dare cry in front of him. Just run home before he realises just how much that hurt.

Except he couldn't move. His limbs were frozen as he stared up through his misty vision and saw the grim expression that Francis wore. He wasn't joking; there wasn't even a shred of playfulness on the normally carefree face. The air in Arthur's throat couldn't reach his lung, and suddenly he was trying to hard just to breathe and to keep from screaming at God because *why, why could this happen?*

Francis reached for his face, and suddenly Arthur's legs actually listened to him. The Brit jumped backwards, putting at least a meter of space between them and glaring balefully at the Frenchman. He didn't wipe away the tears, perfectly content to let them roll down his cheeks and to show the idiot who had stolen his heart that they were there.

Long fingers reached for him again, this time desperate as understanding dawned on Francis's face and he started to backpedal, quickly saying, "*Non*, Arthur, that's not what I meant. No, *please*, come back and let me explain. I was going to say- *Arthur!*"

His feet were slapping against the pavement and carrying him far away from the alley before Arthur even knew he was moving. His breath was coming and going too fast for his heart to stop racing in his chest and he wondered briefly if this meant that it was over, that they could no longer run into each other behind clubs for a smoke or at bars for a beer. And that had him running faster because Francis had already seen him crying and he didn't want to sob in front of him, too.

But he came to a screeching halt as he came out onto the street proper and saw a lump on the ground in front of the movie theatre.

"Oh my god..." He raced over to the body, happy to see its chest was moving very faintly up and down as air slipped into their lungs. He saw the face, and his heart stopped. "Oh my god!"

He moved hair from their face, checking the torso and finding cuts and bruises to match the many on the battered face in his hands. Still winded from the running, his started to try and suck in any air possible because there was no way that he was on the ground like this when Arthur had *just* seen him. There was no way the split lip could be the one that had spat back playful taunts at him so many times and had managed to cool even the hottest temper.

Francis came rushing up behind him, only to stop when he saw Arthur holding someone in his arms. His face drained of colour, and Arthur could've slapped him. Even if he could understand the shock and confusion, they couldn't just stand there.

“Francis, what the hell are you doing?! *Call the police!*” Arthur shouted, and that seemed to snap the blonde out of his daze. He searched his pockets quickly, finding his mobile and punching in the three digits every kid in the country is taught before even their own number. Seeing as that was taken care of, Arthur turned his attention back to the boy in his arms, trying to keep calm even through hysteria that was threatening to overtake him. They had to be calm or else they would fuck this up.

That hysteria almost boiled over when his hands found a knife wound more serious than the rest near his side, still oozing blood. He yanked the black hoodie off and wadded it up to press against the stab wound in an attempt to stop some of the bleeding.

A hand came up to grip his wrist, and he looking down into the bloody face in shock. A tired voice mumbled out, “Thugs...where is he?” The boy’s eyes went wide in panic. “Arthur, he was... he was *right here* with me.”

It became harder to stay calm. He turned back towards Francis. “Francis, look around! Quickly! They were together when they were attacked!”

“Shit!” The blonde began to hunt for the other teen, still talking frantically into the mouthpiece of his phone. “Yes, they were both attacked. No, ma’am, I don’t know why. We’re outside of the movie theatre, and I’m looking for his boyfriend.”

“Arthur?” Green eyes snapped back down to the scared face on his lap. “Am I going to be okay? It-it *hurts*. It hurts so much,” he sobbed, tears streaming down his face to mix with the blood.

“I found him!” Francis called. There was the scrapping of Francis’s shoes on the concrete. “Hey, hey, Gil, it’s me. Wake up. Please, *mon ami*, wake up.”

“Did he find him?” Arthur nodded, hoping that the EMS was coming soon. “Is he okay?”

There was some hoarse coughing in the direction Francis had gone, and Arthur nodded. “Yes, Mattie, Gil sounds like he’s going to be okay. Now you gotta hang in there, okay? Francis called for an ambulance, so just hold on until they get here, and everything will be fine.”

“Arthur, he’s really banged up!” Francis called. “The ambulance should be here in a couple minutes, they said!”

“Well, tell them to hurry up!” He looked back down in to Matthew’s face and stroked curly blonde hair from the round baby-ish face. “You’re going to be okay, Mattie. Everything’s going to be okay. They’re going to come and take you two to the hospital, and I’m going to call Alfred so he can beat the hell out of whoever did this to you. Just keep breathing like you are and stay awake.”

They sat like that on the pavement for what seemed like hours- Arthur keeping Matthew awake, and Francis attempting to wake Gilbert completely up- until two ambulances came screaming down the street. The three men poured from each vehicle with a stretcher and worked on the teens faster than Arthur had ever seen any human move. He had to let go of

Matthew's hand as they took him inside one of them, and he was relieved for the first time in his life as a police cruiser pulled up beside the other emergency vehicles.

However, when the ambulances pulled away, he groped around from Francis. A hand slid into his and squeezed, trying to fill him with any sort of warmth as they both fearfully watched the vehicles drive away. Then, Arthur hoped and prayed that everything would be okay like he had promised.

Chapter End Notes

crawls out of the hole she hid in to write this long ass chapter

Hi, so this chapter took longer than probably any of us suspected, but it is a full twenty pages and I am practically a full time student with the way I have sold my soul to that place. XP Oh wells.

So everyone was way more flirtatious in this than I originally planned, but whatever. They're teenagers and you know what elderly people say about teenagers and the opposite (or the same) sex. Still, please forgive me if you're like eleven or something and have never heard anything sexual in your lifetime. XD

Translations (as usual):

lapin: rabbit

Merci: Thank you

Non: No

cher: darling

Mon dieu: My god

Maman: Affectionate French term for one's mother

mon ami: my friend

I would like to point out that writing the last scene and listening to the more sad songs from the last Captain America movie were NOT a good idea. Like, accidentally, An Old Friend and End of the Line were my favourite songs from it so far, and they ended up as my go to while writing it.^^ Ugh. But i was like crying over the Bucky feels so if you see any mistakes just tell me.^^

There will be one more chapter after this and then we're done. What will happen to Matthew and Gilbert? D: Will Francis and Arthur ever get together? DX Will Elizabetha prove she is possibly the hottest Hungarian I have ever tried to write? XD FIND OUT NEXT TIME. XD

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

The end but also the beginning. :)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Arthur held the hand that was lying beside him on the sofa, gripping it he tried to process everything the man was saying. The words that were pouring from the officer's lips seemed almost like the recounting of a fairy-tale, of some story that was happening to anyone but two of his closest friends. He squeezed the fingers in his hand one more time, needing proof that it wasn't a dream or a hallucination.

After all, he couldn't be saying that they did this as a hate crime. Who could ever hate Matthew? Who could ever hate Gilbert to the point where they broke two of his ribs and gave him a concussion? However, as they stared at the two lying on the beds and then at the small pile of their phones and wallets, it was obvious that it wasn't a mugging gone wrong, and Gilbert hated picking fights in front of the normally pacifistic Matthew. The hand slipped out of his but then wrapped around his back, pulling him close to the warm mass beside him.

Unfortunately, with Matthew's stab wound, a broken rib that had almost punctured his lung, and all the lacerations, the poor Canadian had gotten the worse of it. He'd gone into shock on the way to the hospital. After that, he hadn't woken up thanks to a lot of the pain medication they had put them on. It was scary, staring at their pale- or *paler* in Gilbert's case- faces, eyes closed as tubes connected to their body to pump them full of whatever they needed. It was sick, and Arthur had cried when he first saw the sight.

"Now, we're going to investigate this to our fullest extent," the officer said with a grim expression. "Whoever these little punks are, they've hospitalized at least eight people now, and that's not counting all the people they didn't rough up enough to warrant a visit." He scribbled down some more notes into his tablet after glancing over the charts and nodded to the two of them. "You two watch these boys and then call down to the station the moment that they wake up. If possible, I would like to see if they could work with our sketch artists."

"Yes, of course," came the soothing but still slightly high-strung voice beside him. "Though, if *Mathieu* is well enough to, that might not be necessary. He's a very good artist." The tone turned slightly proud, even if it was tinged with sadness.

"Well, still, I've left my card on the table, so just call me even if it's just to tell me that they're doing better." He shook his head and sighed. "I personally can't say that I understand gay and transgender people, but I also can't understand people the shit out of someone just

because they're slightly different from you." The officer gave them the faintest of smiles. "Pretty soon, we'll start looking as bad as those jokes across the pond, and then where will we be?"

"Oh, don't even speak of it," Arthur joked, shaking his head. The officer laughed and said his goodbyes before leaving the room. He thankfully closed the door behind him and left them alone in the room.

With a shaking breath, the blonde buried his face in the shoulder near him, breathing in the stupid fancy cologne the teen wore and trying to keep calm despite the ever growing hysteria that always threatened to sneak up on him. The arm tightened around his body, even as another hand came up to run through his hair, taking red locks and rubbing them soothingly before scratching gently at the scalp. He wasn't sure how the other blonde could be so calm, but he was glad that there was someone there who could comfort him.

"Arthur, *cher*, are you okay?" Francis murmured, kissing his forehead. "Do you need to go home for some sleep?"

He shook his head instantly. "I want to be here when they wake up. I wanna make sure that they're okay." He looked up into blue eyes and blinked away the tears. "Why would they do this to these two, of all people? What did they do wrong, Francis? What did any of us do wrong?"

"Nothing, *cher*. We did nothing, but that's just the world. We're trying, and we're succeeding in so many places, but it takes time. It can't happen overnight." He pressed more kisses to the scrunched up forehead and continued to stroke his hair. "Don't stress out about it, Arthur. We need to be happy when they wake up, not all doom and gloom."

He nodded and settled himself closer in the warm embrace, telling himself it was because he was cold and what else was the frog for but to keep him comfortable. If there had been anyone else in the room with him, he'd be doing the same thing. Like, if Liz got off work anytime soon, he would hop over to her. So, since Francis was convenient, he cuddled with Francis.

Still, he couldn't deny the part of him that was happy that it was Francis here, the one he still liked even if every second in his presence hurt. So he shut out any pestering thoughts, buried his nose into the other blonde's shoulder, and ignored what could only be a smirk on that smug face. The hand in his hair continued to stroke him leisurely, and he would be lying if he said it didn't help him calm down a bit. After all, he'd always been a sucker for things like this when he had headaches or when he was crying as a kid, and his mom would take care of him.

There was movement on one of the beds, and Arthur jerked up, green eyes latching on the bed to the left that held Gilbert. The German- sorry, *Prussian*- was sitting up, his red eyes darting around and trying to look for someone. They first found Francis and Arthur, much to the Brit's embarrassment. He didn't move out of the Frenchman's arms, but he didn't quite meet Gil's eyes either. Instead, he cleared his throat and gently asked, "How do you feel?"

“Like shit,” Gil replied immediately but with one of his usual grins. He suddenly sobered and looked around the room again, no doubt looking for Matthew. “Shit, Birdy, what did they do to you?” He began to move, almost like he was getting out of bed, so Arthur stood up and gently pressed him back onto the mattress. “Arthur, man, I know what you mean, but I have to see him. Is he okay? That one bastard knocked me out with the bat, and I didn’t see what they did to him. What did they do to him?”

“You and Matthew,” Francis began, his voice showing his exhaustion, “both have broken ribs, and you have a concussion.” He stood beside Arthur and gripped his best friend’s pale hand in both of his. He swallowed and sighed, obviously not looking forwards to saying what was next. “Gilbert, they stabbed Mathieu.”

The effect was immediate. Gilbert tried to sit up again, his white face filling with dark, angry red splotches, and he started swearing in his mother tongue. Arthur and Francis both had to work to get him to lie back down, lest he knock around his brain some more and make himself sick, and a nurse discovered that he was awake. She came bustling in, her mouth a strict, flat line as she pushed the two blondes aside and forced Gilbert back down. Her blue eyes were sharp, and she crossed her arms over her chest.

“You will do your boyfriend no good if you injure yourself further while he’s resting, Mr. Beilschmidt,” she chided him. He grumbled under his breath but listened to her. “Now, your Matthew is going to be okay. They patched him up in the O.R., and now he just needs to heal. As long as you can prove that you won’t hindrance his recovery, you’re free to stay in here with him as long as it takes, even after you have healed and are discharged. However, if you stress him out and make it hard for him to rest, I will boot you out of the hospital and ban you from even walking on the street outside of it. Do I make myself clear?”

“Yes, ma’am.” He sighed and craned his neck to look over at the frail boy in the bed beside of his. “Has he woken up yet? Do you know how long it’ll be until he’s okay again?”

She shook his head. “‘No’ on both of those. He woke up briefly on the scene but passed out due to shock in the ambulance. Since then, like you, he’s been out like a lamp. We aren’t sure until he wakes how much pain he’s in, so it’s pretty touch and go until then. However, now that you’re awake, it can’t be too much longer.”

Arthur’s heart stopped as he heard a soft chuckle behind him. They turned towards Matthew’s bed, only to see a violet eye open and lips curve mischievously. Gil’s air hissed out of him through his teeth, and the nurse grinned. They all grinned when those lips opened to mutter, “How right you are on that one. It seems like I can still pick my dork’s voice up through even this drug haze.”

“Birdy! Are you okay? Are you in any pain?” Gilbert asked, worried. Matthew shook his head and smiled at his nervous boyfriend, obviously happy to see that he was okay.

“No, I think the morphine is taking care of the pain for now. Though, it seems like it’s wearing off, so who knows how much longer I got left.” He held out his hand, and a pale one latched onto it between the beds. They squeezed, no doubt trying to re-establish that the other one was truly there and whole, not taken away but whoever had attacked them. “I love you, Gilbert,” Matthew murmured, a sweet smile gracing his lips.

The typical grin moulded into something a bit tamer and something to match his boyfriend's. "I love you, too, Matthew." He sucked in a breath and sighed. "I-I'm sorry that this happened. You told me not to grab your hand with those guys looking at us like that, but I'm too much of an idiot to listen, huh?"

Matthew attempted to sit up but got a head shake from the nurse to lie back down. Still, he replied vehemently, "You stop that! You and I both know that they would've probably killed us if you hadn't stood up for us. You beat the shit out of them, and that probably saved our lives." The Canadian obviously had issues blinking away the fresh tears that were springing into his eyes. "If I had lost you, I have no idea what I would do."

"I couldn't leave behind my Birdy- not on those terms. Besides, when they started swinging at you with that bat, I... I just lost it, Mattie. I was scared shitless, and you can't take guys like that." He blew out an uneasy breath and reached over to grip Matthew's hand even tighter. "No one is going to take me away from you, and no one is going to lay a finger on you while I'm still kicking. Okay?"

Matthew's voice was broken, and he swallowed thickly. "Okay." Those tears started running down his cheeks, their paths broken by the reluctant grin Gil managed to get out of him. "You big oaf, you better not leave me," he demanded before he hiccupped. Arthur and Francis chuckled, and the nurse smiled as she went to tell the doctor that the two of them had woken up.

Matthew and Gilbert did well, both managing to sit up and take in something a bit closer to a solid by the time night rolled around. Of course, the nurses and Matthew kept a close eye on the Prussian to make sure the concussion wasn't affecting him beyond the nausea that he felt and the headache that pounded at the very edges of his mind. Apparently his talk all these years about having a hard head wasn't too far off.

Violet eyes watched his cousin and friend talk together with Gilbert, sitting too close on the sofa for them to just be casual acquaintances. Of course, he wouldn't dream of breathing a word about the two of them with Arthur as high-strung as he was about Francis and Francis just being Francis. However, he realised that if he didn't give them a little push, then they would dance around each other and avoid making any sort of move towards the other. Both of them were terrified of doing something to scare the other one off, and they had their hearts under their sleeves instead of on top of them. It was beyond frustrating, and Matthew figured that being laid up would have some benefits, too, dammit.

So, when Arthur and Francis travelled down to the cafeteria to retrieve some ice cream for the four of them, Matthew turned to his boyfriend. Said boyfriend looked up at him over the lip of his soup bowl, and he had to keep from smiling at his beautiful sweetheart.

A lot of people would say that Gil was lucky to have scored Matthew, but the pale teen did so much for him. When they had first started going out, Gil had been a loudmouth asshole and Matthew couldn't say three words without stuttering. Both of them lived in the shadow of their younger brothers, and they were constantly trying to make a name for themselves in some respect. It had started out as heavy flirting and then progressed to getting drunk one

night and having sex under the abandoned stage that the Bad Touch Trio had performed on one evening. After that, they had decided to start officially dating, much to everyone's surprise. Matthew became more open and proud of himself, and Gil had become... well, not less *loud*, per say, but he was working to become less annoying and more supportive.

Naturally, Matthew wanted something like this to happen for two of the closest people in his life. He knew it was a little nosy, but he couldn't help but feel like they were moving too slow for anything good to happen. Francis would probably flirt one too many times, or Arthur would say something that would cut a little too deep, and they would screw up any chance they had at being happy. Matthew had to move before that happened, or else they would both live the rest of their lives wondering if they could've been happier with their high school crush.

"Gil, have you noticed anything about the two of them?" Matthew asked cautiously, not wanting to give away anything unless he had to. If it seemed like his boyfriend would be useless, he wouldn't involve him and break his promises to Arthur and Francis.

Except, Gilbert just snorted and answered, "You mean how it's obviously they've wanted to sit on each other's dicks all night? Yeah, I noticed that. Why? Are we going to do something about it?" He shook his head. "Honestly, for someone who claims to be brilliant and someone who claims to know all the ways of wooing a lover, they are possibly the stupidest couple I have ever met."

Unable to help himself, Matthew burst into a fit of giggles, covering the huge grin on his lips with a skinny hand. Gilbert beamed, happy that he'd made his boyfriend laugh and set down his bowl. As the laughter subsided, though, he heard the sound of shoes approaching the door. With a hurried, "Follow my lead," he attempted to look natural as the two blondes made their way into the room with tiny bowls of ice cream and spoons.

Arthur shook his head and set the two bowls in his hands in front of the injured couple and then the spoons. "They only had vanilla; I hope that's okay."

"Oh, that's fine, Artie," Gilbert assured him with a cocky grin. "Any ice cream is good ice cream. Doesn't matter if it's vanilla or black forest chocolate." He ate a spoonful and closed his eyes to groan with pleasure.

Doesn't that sound familiar, Matthew thought absently as he took another bite. He watched out of his peripheral as Arthur sat down beside him in the chair, and he could've cheered. However, it wasn't time to do this. It was still only nine o'clock at night with plenty of time for Arthur to screw everything up. They needed to do this later in the evening.

So he stalled, gently easing Arthur and Francis's attention from the clock and towards the conversation. They worked together on the sketch that they needed to give to police, with Francis running off at some point to find an eraser when Matthew messed up. Glancing at the clock, he realised with a smile that it was time.

He reached for the cup of lukewarm coffee that sat on his bedside table and then, without warning, "accidentally" knocked it over onto the unsuspecting blonde that sat beside him. Arthur swore and jumped back, but the damage was done. A large stain of brown coloured

his shirt and jeans nicely, making the fabric stick to his skin and cling with its sugar sweetness. Matthew mentally applauded himself for always having such an insane amount of sugar in his coffee and for having such great ideas. Arthur couldn't just towel that off and call it a day until he got home; he would need to get those clothes off ASAP.

Then Francis walked back in, took note of the situation, and frowned. He reached for the cursing Brit, trying to calm him down at the same time as he asked about any injuries. They looked adorable, but they needed to get to the next stage as soon as possible.

So Matthew immediately adapted his face to look apologetic, tapping into that stereotypical Canadian kindness. "Are you okay? Oh my god, I'm so sorry, Arthur!" he said in a rush, trying to sit up properly so that he could help. The sketchpad was set aside as a nurse came in to see what the commotion was. "It didn't burn you, did it?"

"No, don't worry," Arthur assured him with a deep frown. "It's just sticky. Ugh, and I'll have to ride home on the tube like this. I bet they'll all laugh at me. Dammit."

Matthew shot Francis his best, "*Now is your chance!*" look, and the blonde thankfully nodded in acknowledgement. His hands slid to rest on Arthur's elbows, and he made him look in his blue eyes. In a soft voice, he murmured, "My flat is a couple blocks down the way. I have a shirt and jeans you can change into there." With an easy smile, he added, "Of course that is totally up to you, and you can just grab the jacket in my car to cover up with. I just figured that fresh clothes would feel better than damp ones."

With a heavy blush and a slight frown, Arthur stared into his eyes, no doubt looking for the ulterior motive. Finding none, he sighed. "Fine, I can do that if you're alright with that." He gave the two in the hospital beds an apologetic look. "Sorry, mates, but we should be going."

Matthew waved him off. "Whatever. You've been here all day, and you were there when it counted. Plus, you haven't gotten sleep since the other night, and I would hate for you to get sick because of us." He smiled encouragingly. "Go on home, you two. Come and visit tomorrow after school to make up for it." When Francis turned to gather his stuff, the Canadian shot Arthur a wink, causing his friend to turn an even darker shade of red and splutter but also give him a hesitant wink back. The message was clear.

Get some ass tonight, Arthur Kirkland.

Thunder rolled outside after a bolt of lightning flashed across the sky. He watched in awe out the window, heart hammering in his chest at the sight. He had grown out of his fear for all storms outside of the roaring, possibly tornado producing ones, and the fear had morphed into a cautious admiration. Storms like this were beautiful in their own way, and he couldn't help but wish he could safely step outside into the pouring rain and let it soak him. After all, he was already drenched in part, and he'd be drenched on his way home, unless he could get a ride.

He was stirred from his thoughts by the sound of footsteps, and he turned to face his host. "We're the same size," Francis said, handing him some sweats and a tee, "so you should be

able to fit into this with little difficulty. Arthur accepted the small bundle and went in the direction of the bathroom Francis had pointed out to him earlier.

The flat was small but efficient, with a pretty large kitchen, and a hallway which led to one and a half bedrooms, a bathroom, and the infamous laundry room. The living room wasn't anything to sneeze at, but it didn't seem as loved as the other rooms, especially the kitchen. He shuffled into the small room and set the clothes on the side of the sink. The shower looked tempting, but he didn't want to take advantage of Francis's hospitality. Plus, the only soap was the fragrant type Francis used, and he wasn't sure his heart could take being wrapped up in that scent until he bathed again.

So after he took off his clothes and pressed his fingers against his skin to check for sticky residue, he opted to use one of the washcloths that were tucked under the sink. He shivered as the warm, soaking cloth spread across his skin and was instantly transported back to the day before when he'd done the same thing after some fantasizing went a little too far. He once again cursed those damn tight pants and sighed, moving the cloth to the leftover coffee on his thighs.

He'd be stupid if he didn't suspect that Matthew had done this on purpose, especially after that damn wink. What had he been trying to force them into? Rough and crazy sex brought on by the gratitude of some clothes to wear on the way home. He'd sobered up already, and there was no way the damn Frenchman was getting in his pants without so much as a drop of alcohol in his system. So, with a frown, he pulled on the sweats and tee, glad for the soft cotton against his sensitive skin. Unfortunately, it meant that his anatomy would have to behave or Francis would know right away, but the moment the prick opened his mouth, they wouldn't have to worry about that.

Stepping out into the living room once again, he spotted Francis messing around with some antique record player and letting out a small triumphant sound when the needle clicked successfully on the vinyl and soon started playing. Of course, it was some slow song with trumpets that sounded like they were straight out of the '30s. Part of felt surprised that the other blonde owned something like this, but honestly, with the varying sound of Bad Touch's music, he realised that it probably wasn't as shocking as he should think. After all, he probably had many influences for what he helped them write.

Francis straightened and looked at his guest with an easy smile. "Do they fit okay? I know we're the same size, but my hips a bit more shapely than yours." He strolled over to the connecting kitchen and started pulling out various items from his fridge and cupboards. "I know you're probably hungry still, since that tiny soup dinner was the first thing you've had in almost a day, so I can make something for us." He then grabbed a saucepan, a skillet, and a large pot from a cabinet below the counter. "And don't give me anything along the lines of not wanting to inconvenience me or just wanting to get home already. I don't feel up to driving in this weather, and there is no way I am letting you walk home with those monsters lurking."

Anger ignited at the presumption that he was not only an obvious target for the homophobic and transphobic attackers, but that he also would be unable to escape or defend himself, he crossed his arms over his chest and thought of something cheeky to say. "No, it was more

along the lines of, ‘Your food disgusts me, and I’d rather die than eat your stupid French cuisine.’”

Instead of pissing Francis off, however, he just laughed and continued setting up the stove for whatever he was making. “You’re hilarious, Arthur, especially when you try so hard to make me mad at you. Don’t worry about what to say or how to feel, okay?” He gave the anxious teen a placating smile and gestured for him to sit down. “I’ll make the food, and you sit in there and listen to the music. Some Edith Piaf will do you good.”

He grudgingly sat, leaning back against the plush sofa and letting himself smile just a bit. Though the flat was undeniably chic, it was still enjoyable to live in. The furniture wasn’t uncomfortable, the colours weren’t too bold or wacky, and it didn’t look like it was auditioning for a spot in some uppity magazine. He extended his feet out onto the carpet, letting the soft fibres tickle the bottom of them. Of course, Francis had such a lovely place to live in. He could barely recognise it, however, without the gyrating bodies and the low lighting as streaks of red, green, and yellow flashed from some shitting equipment.

“What’s wrong?” Francis called to him, and Arthur shot him a confused look. “You’re frowning more than usual. Is something not to your liking?”

“No,” he assured him, turning back to look around the room. “It just looks different is all. There’s usually a hundred people in here, so I’ve never been able to see what it looks like empty.” He shrugged and shot his host a small smile. “It’s nice, Francis.”

He got a grin in return. “I’m glad you think so! Matthew and I worked together to set it up when my parents helped me buy it. We stopped in the city for a lot of it, and the boys helped us set it up.” A small frown marred the expression. “Though, I believe part of the reason Gilbert tagged along was so he and Matthew could make out in the smaller bedroom that he uses when he wants to get away from his parents- my aunt and uncle.” He went back to whatever he was sautéing on the stove and hummed thoughtfully. “If you want, you can call your parents and ask to spend the night. I really don’t want you to walk home, and it sounds like the storm is getting worse.”

“I really don’t want to impose,” Arthur began, and Francis rolled his eyes. “What? Is it an issue that I like to be polite and just stay over in someone’s house? Someone, who I might add, I am still slightly angry with.”

There was a clatter as Francis dropped the spatula, but he recovered quickly. However, now there was a noticeable forcefulness with his cooking, the fluid way he was eased the instrument now jerky and erratic. Arthur didn’t know what else to say, but he couldn’t let what happened last night just slip on by. The two of them had been so close, close enough that he hadn’t cared if they kissed or not, and then Francis had ruined it all by telling him that he wasn’t the person for him.

He would be lying if he said that it hadn’t been turned back and forth in his head a thousand times. Was he not the Frenchman’s type? Had he said one too many bitter words and cut deep enough that Francis had lost interest in him? He nibbled on his lip as the thoughts twisted back and forth in his head. Of course, he had always assumed that Francis knew that he would spit fire if anyone stepped a bit too close, especially those who flirt more than they

breathe, but he knew exactly what assuming does. He plucked at a loose string on the shirt and sighed.

Turning back towards Francis, he was surprised to see that those blue eyes were glancing over at him as much as his cooking would allow. A blush lit pale cheeks, and green eyes darted immediately to the record player. He picked up his phone from the couch beside him and scrolled through his messages to find his mother's and tell her that he was probably going to spend the night if that was okay. Thankfully, she had stayed up late and sent him a quick reply, giving her acceptance and only the request that he make it to school on time the next day. He sent her a "thanks" back with a smiley face- for cheeky effect because he knew his mother hated them- and closed his phone.

Two plates were set down on the coffee table, and Francis sat a foot away from him on the couch. He looked at the steaming stir-fry, his stomach begging him to take a bite before it started eating itself, and Francis nodded at him. Arthur picked up the fork that lay on the plate and dug in. A small moan of pleasure escaped, making the blonde at his side smile. A hand rested on the cushion between them, and he glanced down at it. Of course he wanted to take it and squeeze the life out of it, but his dignity wouldn't allow him to hold the hand of the man who had already expressed his disinterest in having a relationship. So, he continued to eat as his host did the same, even as his stomach was sloshing back and forth with his anxiety.

When they finished, Arthur helped him with the dishes, and they ended up standing in the kitchen together, staring at the floor, the fridge, the stove, and just about anything but each other. His heart was running at about a thousand beats per second, and he had to lean against the island to avoid feeling sick. Francis was starting to look at him now, no doubt waiting until then to speak to him, and he was not prepared to do so. If they talked, Francis would just say the same thing he was going to finish saying the night before, and his heart couldn't take being broken with no way to escape.

Accompanied with an impatient sigh, he heard the other teen murmur, "Arthur, please, look at me." He shook his head, tears beginning to well up in his eyes as he kept them pointed at the suddenly blurry but still very interesting tile, and Francis moved to slip his fingers into blonde and red hair. His palms cupped Arthur's face, feeling the first tears fall and warming the chilled cheeks. "*Cher*, it's okay. You don't have to be scared. I'm not going to hurt you; you know that."

"Do I?" he retorted, looking up and through the haze to meet worried blue. "Because you already have so many times, and I don't think I can deal with anymore." *Shit, there it is*, he realised belatedly, sucking in air as he tried to figure out how to cover that up. He opened his mouth, but no words came out, only a strangled sound that made Francis's eyes widen even more.

Suddenly, he was pulled tight against the teen's chest, head pushed into a warm neck. Arms squeezed him closer as lips peppered small kisses to the top of his head. It was obvious that Francis was trying to comfort him, but it just made it harder for him to breathe as it dawned on him that he was making a complete and utter fool of himself in front of the guy he had some stupid schoolgirl crush on. However, no matter how hard he tried, his composure

slipped further and further out of his reach, and he was reduced to a quivering, sniffing mess in arms that didn't hesitate to keep him upright.

Shame rolled off the shaking body in Francis's arms; he could sense it. So, he continued to press reassuring kisses to the poor boy he'd tried and failed to woo correctly. He felt his face scrunch up as his eyes threatened to rain tears as well, but he relaxed and forced them back, forced himself to be a rock and whatever else Arthur needed. His *lapin* running last night had been good in terms of them being able to find Matthew and Gilbert, but it had soiled Francis's attempt to explain himself. The cuddling at the hospital had led him into a false sense of security because apparently, no, it hadn't meant that all was forgiven. Arthur remembered his words and remembered his misinterpreted meaning crystal clear, which meant that Francis would have to act fast if he wanted to clean this mess up.

"*Cher*, you must realise that what I said last night," he whispered into the red-streaked blonde head, "was absolutely the worst way to word that." He massaged gently circles into the small of Arthur's back, pressing another kiss to an exposed temple as he went. "When I said that I'm not that someone, I said it under the conditions that the person who deserves you doesn't believe they do and thinks about you every waking moment."

"And you don't?" came the tiny reply, still pressed against his neck. Francis could've laughed at the innocent look that his sexy, hard-to-get Englishman was giving off, like he wasn't as tough as nails punk at any other moment. However, it also made him happy that he was able to peel away that exterior and find the gushing sweetheart that hid under that scowl.

So he had to find more, expose it all and get himself back on Arthur's good graces. That could only mean unleashing everything that he worked to hide under his own façade. Now wasn't the time for masks and pretty words. It was time for him to man up and say exactly what Arthur was to him, and he was just as terrified.

"Unfortunately, I do not think of you every waking second," he admitted softly. "I tend to think about myself sometimes and then you the other three quarters." He tried to keep his tone light, and he was rewarded with the gentle curve of a smile against his neck. Heart fluttering in his chest, he continued. "Nor do I think I am undeserving of you. In my mind, I am the best person for you- the best to crack you open, find out what I can do to make you happy, and to do that for you for the rest of your life." Arthur peeked up at him, and he smiled down into those watery emerald eyes. "And there is no one I would rather be with me than you."

"Then why do you sleep with other people?" Arthur asked, his voice barely above a pained whisper. "Why is there someone new in your bed every time I see it? How do I know that you won't just toss me out the moment you get bored with me?"

"Because I'm waiting for you." He laughed wryly and buried his face in those streaks of red, using Arthur's earthy scent to calm his racing heart. "I'm such a vicious man. I see you, see you play around with men at the bar, with Liz, and I want you so much it hurts." He exhaled, reaching up to play with the baby hairs at Arthur's nape. "And you push me away every time I try, and that's my fault. The words I say authentically to you have been played in the ear of everyone you see me with, and they became hollow to you. But I didn't know how else to say it without scaring you. If I said flat out that I wanted to kidnap you and take you away from

every other eye and every other man who could possibly lure you into their embrace, you'd call me a madman, and that's what I am. I'm a madman."

He shook his head and frowned. "I messed up, Arthur. Every time it sunk in that I would have to wait and go without, I would become desperate. In the beginning, I thought it was just a stupid fascination, a case of wanting what I can't have, and I resented you for catching my eye when I could have anyone else. I started to sleep with people to get you out of my head." He chuckled, but it sounded sadder than he was going for. "Then I realised all of them had a piece of you. Could you imagine it- suddenly looking back at all my partners and seeing they either had dazzling green eyes, or beautiful blonde hair, or a scowl that's supposed to send you away but reels you in? It was crazy, but I decided to just get over the resentment and see it for what it was."

"And what is it?" Arthur asked, his voice betraying him with just the teensiest amount of hope. It made his heart squeeze in his chest, and he wanted to grin at the second chance he was getting. It was obvious that the guitarist was offering him a chance of redemption.

So, very slowly, and in a way that Arthur couldn't misinterpret, he said, "I like you. I have eyes only for you, and I want to be the only one for you." He tilted the teen's face up to his, keeping their eyes locked, and smiled brightly. "And I want you to be the only one for me."

"Will you be okay with only me?" Arthur asked shyly even as his fingers clenched around Francis's shirt. Insecurity was running rampant in his green eyes, making the other blonde's heart ache at the sight. Fingers pulled nervous ones off of his shirt and combed through them to squeeze palms together, nervous sweat collecting between them. One was brought up to Francis's lips so that he could kiss the shaking, pale knuckles of his terrified *lapin*.

"Only you?" he whispered. He rubbed his cheek against Arthur's hand. "You are so much more than you give yourself credit for; you are marvellous, Arthur. Truly and undeniably marvellous. There is not one person on this earth whose worth I would compare to yours, and you have nothing to worry about whether *I* will be okay with *you* or not." He stepped closer to the body in front of him, pressing butterfly kisses to the pale skin wherever he could find it. "I deserve you but just barely; it is you who I worry will not be okay with me."

The admission was hard, but he could tell by the swift intake of air that it wasn't in vain. Still, he couldn't meet Arthur's eyes, so he continued to kiss his beautiful porcelain skin and thank whatever god had helped in his creation for this teen. He wanted to tilt his head towards those parted lips and gently suck on them, open them to get a taste of the delicious Englishman who had stolen his heart. However, he could only wait for Arthur's answer and stay as far away from anything that would startle his *lapin* into bolting.

He was shocked by a gentle nudging of a flushed nose that forced Francis to tilt his head in a way that made his lips easier to access by another, more hesitant pair. Arthur pressed his lips against Francis's, gently easing them open so allow a tentative stroke his tongue against the surprised Frenchman's. Hands fisted around the cotton shirt Arthur had been given before spreading out and sliding up to tangle in blonde and red hair and rest against the throbbing pulse in his neck.

From there, the kiss gradually lost steam, and it broke off into gentle pecks. Francis smiled as he rested his forehead against Arthur's and kissed the round nose. Of course, the blonde's face was about as red as the streaks in his hair, but he smiled back confidently as he stared straight into Francis's eyes. He seemed slightly pleased with himself, which made Francis smirk.

The smirk didn't go unnoticed. Arthur almost rolled his eyes but allowed it to pass anyways because now wasn't the time for arguing over anything that wasn't worth it. No, now he could step further into the embrace and burrow his face into the warm neck that smelled so good and made his heart race. He could feel hands smoothing over the muscles of his back-sliding effortlessly over the fabric of his borrowed shirt and making his skin break out into gooseflesh.

"We're both idiots," he murmured into his boyfriend's- he was assuming it was safe to call Francis that, since they had admitted their feelings for each other and had kissed- neck. "All this time dancing around each other, too scared to say how we feel."

"*Oui*, not our finest hour," Francis agreed with a chuckle that made Arthur's chest tighten. "However, it has taught us to be even more thankful that everything worked out for the best, has it not?" Arthur nodded and then something dawned on him, making him snicker. "What? What's so funny?" the other blonde asked, pulling away to look into green eyes.

"Nothing, nothing," Arthur promised with a smirk. "Just that you had this huge, romantic set up in the living room with music and dinner, and we had our confession in your kitchen." He grinned mischievously and poked Francis in the ribs. "Funny how that worked out, isn't it?"

"That, *cher*, is because you have no appreciation of the more classy side of romance, preferring to do it in a more brash, unrefined fashion." He picked out a strand of Arthur's hair and played it between his fingers, shaking his head in resolution. "It must be my job as your sexy lover to teach you to slow down and appreciate how the French do things."

Arthur made a face like he was gearing up to argue, but then he just smiled again and danced out of Francis's embrace. "Okay, if you want to take things slow, then I guess I will have to stay in the guest room tonight. After all, if I sleep in the bed with you, I might tempt you to speed things up a little, and I would hate to ruin your French method of romance."

Francis grabbed for him, fingers twisting into the fabric of his sweatpants and hauling him back into the Frenchman's arms. "*Non*, I have waited a year to hold you in my arms, and I am not missing another moment of it." He winked, causing Arthur to blush like a tomato again. "However, if you are tired and wish to go to bed..."

Arthur rolled his eyes. "Well, hurry up, then." And with a smirk, he followed Francis back into his room, claimed a half of the mattress as his own, and curled up in Francis's arms. They spared a few more kisses and some sweet words in the dark before they really did fall asleep in each other's arms, closer than either one had previously even dreamed.

He'd never seen Liz look so shocked. Her mouth literally dropped open, and he had to teasingly say, "Are you trying to catch that stray fly or something?" for her snap out of it. However, he was walking on air, his hand clenched tightly inside of Francis's as the fashionable blonde strayed behind ever so slightly to admire his handiwork. A tight, leather shirt clung to Arthur's skinny body, complimented with shimmery pants that clung to an ass that should've been illegal. Francis had finished it off with a pair of stiletto boots and a small smile.

"If anyone looks sideways at you dressed in that, *cher*, I might have to do something that'll make what Matthew and Gilbert went through look like child's play," he had warned quietly, adjusting the red and blonde locks out of Arthur's beautiful eyes.

"What the *hell* happened with you two?!" Liz screeched, her mouth split in the biggest grin Arthur had ever seen. Like, the Cheshire cat's smile had nothing on Elizabetha's, and it just made Arthur laugh out loud at her expression. "No! Arthur Kirkland, so help me, I will ground you from any sexy times with Francis- who you are obviously dating by that *death grip* you have on each other, holy shit- if you do not recap the last forty-eight hours for me *right now*."

"Yes, Mum," he drawled, throwing his free arm around her shoulders and bumping his head into hers for a moment. "Walk and talk with me, babe, and I'll catch you up." He stopped long enough to kiss Francis on the lips goodbye as the amused blonde headed off to his first class before Arthur began recounting his whole escapade.

She let out a long squeak when he finished with the sleepover that had happened the night before, jumping up and down as he laughed at her antics. "Oh my god, Arthur! You're going to get some! Why didn't you get some last night?! You could've had hot, steamy, ass-pounding sex with that god all night and skipped school, you know?!"

He chuckled and shook his head, shrugging as they stopped outside her classroom. "What can I say? I've got him on a tighter leash than that. He promised he won't hit it and quit it, and I am determined to make him wait to hit it until he is on his knees begging." He winked but then glanced at the clock. "Shit, love, I've got to go or I'll be late again."

"So who's going to top?!" she called after him after he started leaving. He just smirked and shrugged again, making her frown. "Arthur! You know that he's never bottomed!"

"Well, I'm prepared to show him how persuasive an Englishman can be as well when it comes to romance." He flashed her an impish smile. "I've been told we go fast, and he's going to show me how to go slow."

"Oh, baby." She fanned herself with a hand before waving him off, and he just laughed at her. Bolting to his first class, he made it into his seat just as the bell rung.

Francis was waiting for him when he got out. People stared at them, no doubt trying to figure out why one of the hottest guys in school who never showed interest in anyone unless there was low lighting and a spare surface would be showing interest in old "Caterpillar Kirkland." However, Francis had shoved his hand into the barely-there back pocket of Arthur's

borrowed jeans and was smoothing his thumb over the thin material that stood between him and Arthur's ass.

"You know, I have never wanted to have do anything stereotypical before," Francis muttered darkly, "but I swear I will haul you into that broom closet if you don't stop what you're doing."

"You? Stereotypical? Never," Arthur teased, but then he raised his eyebrows, the words sinking in. "And what am I doing, Francis? I'm just walking as I normally do, but with an add-on." He kissed the corner of his boyfriend's mouth, struggling to keep from laughing at the sour expression Francis was attempting to pull off. "You know, I thought I was the designated scowler in this relationship. Are you trying to usurp me? I'm not sure if I can take over the hot mess role in your stead."

"That does it." Fingers speared between Arthur's and locked, pulling him unceremoniously into the nearest lavatory and barely sparing to see if anyone else was inside. Arthur was then slammed into the privacy wall that began the small row of stalls and he stared up into burning blue eyes that looked ready to strip every single article off his body.

"You are really trying my patience," he purred softly, leaning into Arthur's face and sliding his fingertips under the fabric of the startled blonde's shirt. "I don't want to go slow anymore. I want to copy your silly English tradition to conquer and pillage everything in sight." He glanced around for effect. "You're the only thing in sight, *lapin*."

This kiss was rough, lips slanting over each other as fingers clenched tightly into skin and hair. Arthur groaned low in his throat, loving the wild abandon of it all and understanding why Mattie and Liz had been so adamant about hooking him up. His blood was on fire, roaring in his ears as Francis pinned him against the wall and grabbed his hips in a bruising grip.

Francis's clothed erection ground against his and stirred it from its already half-hard state as Arthur gasped. A shaking and pale hand came to cover his mouth as moans tumbled out. He let his head fall back against the white tile and bit his lip until coppery blood sparked into his mouth. A part of him was ashamed that he was falling apart so easily at something as simple as heavy petting, but the dirty words tumbling out of Francis's mouth didn't help anything.

"You know, cher, you look absolutely delicious like that. You're so hard already for me, you poor little virgin. Are you a virgin?" His lips brushed against Arthur's ear as slender fingers slipped beneath his waistband. *"No underwear, Arthur? I suppose that's a good thing considering how much you're already coming apart. Do you want me to collect all that precious nectar you're staining your jeans with? I'm sure you taste just as good as you look. Has a man ever touched you like this?"* Arthur's breath hitched as those fingers tightened around his length, earning him a knowing smirk. *"What else do you want? I could always put my-*"

"If you say one more word, bastard," a voice said irritably from somewhere in the bathroom, "I will blow chunks all over both of you."

Arthur and Francis froze, colour draining from their faces. Arthur glared through his hazed vision at his boyfriend and muttered, "I thought you looked before you did this shit."

"Yeah, no," Lovino said as he stepped out of the last stall. "No, I was shitting between classes, hoping that it would save me from that annoying prick of my brother, only to hear you two idiots stumble in here like a couple of horny middle schoolers under the bleachers." He rolled his eyes and began washing his hands in the first sink, pumping soap out and scrubbing viciously. "We were wondering when the hell you would just give up the act and start dating already, but I figure you were both smart enough to avoid doing it in public places when you have no control of your dicks or your voices."

"Sorry, Lovino," Arthur mumbled, rubbing the back of his neck. He felt something twitch *down there* and looked down to see Francis's arm still sticking out of his jeans. "Dammit, Francis, get out of there!"

"Yes, Francis, please," Lovino groaned. "Seriously, do we need to put mitts on you to keep your hands to yourselves or can I trust you to act the almost-adults you are? Even Antonio has the common sense to wait until we're at home before he gets grabby." He shut off the water and pulled two paper towels from the machine. "Now, I will go inform my boyfriend of the new addition of the band and begin to hash some ideas for the new name."

Arthur asked, "New name?" at the same time as an excited "New addition?" came from the idiot in front of him. They stared at each other before blushing and looking back at Lovi, who seemed close to bursting a blood vessel.

"Yes, you dumbasses. You passed the ignition because obviously you and Francis have been eating each other's faces all morning, and with four people, The Bad Touch *Trio* makes no sense. We'll have to think of something cool that'll keep the same crowd and won't confuse our venues. It would also be cool if it was something that won't ruin Matthew's artwork when he goes to replace it- if that's possible. I like that guy, and he put too much time into designing that shit to have to scrap all of it."

"How about simply, The Bad Touch?" Arthur suggested, and Lovino shrugged, moving past them to leave. "Sorry again for the, uh... yeah."

"Whatever," came the muttered reply, but Arthur was comforted with the sight of a small smile before Lovino completely turned his back on them and walked out.

As soon as Arthur was certain they were alone again, he punched Francis in the shoulder. Doubling over in pain, a startled groan slipped through his boyfriend's lips, but he shook his head. "Please, Jesus, Francis, never do that to me in a public place like that again." He stepped closer, feeling bad as he looked at the pain on the Frenchman's face, and he pecked his lips sweetly as an apology. "Are you okay? Did I hurt you too badly?"

"*Non*, I think I will be okay once I get feeling back in my arm." He tilted his head up and stared into green eyes with the most pathetic look he could muster. "It would feel better if you kissed it," he said solemnly.

Arthur laughed and did as he was asked before purposefully ruffling the already mussed hair. Francis shrieked and furiously tried to fix the damage as he pouted at his boyfriend at his obvious cruelty. However, he couldn't find himself to complain too much at the warm smile brightened that beautiful face. So, he ignored the offense and pressed his lips against the smiling pair, bringing his hand up rest on Arthur's neck and ease into a better angle.

However, he was stopped with a swift elbow in the gut, and he wheezed. Arthur was still smiling, but it was all lethality at the edges, making Francis almost groan at sexy expression itself. He could get used to a cocky grin like that, especially if he could work it into a more submissive look as he made the blonde a panting mess.

Arthur gave him another kiss as an apology but then patted his still throbbing shoulder. "What did I tell you, you twat?" he asked, shaking his head. "Come on, love. Let's get to class."

"Fine, but don't think I won't trap you again, *lapin*," he said with a smirk. "If you don't watch out, I'll snare you and then sink my teeth into your delicious skin."

"Oh, do you have a biting problem we should get treated? Do I need to snap your neck off like you do those American vampires? I know your face is attractive and all, but I feel like some of the appeal will be gone if it's not connected to your shoulders."

"You admit that I'm attractive!" Francis cheered, getting a spluttered response as red climbed up Arthur's throat to colour his cheeks and ears. "So cute! Aw, *cher*, I wish you would stay that lovely colour of red. It matches your hair so splendidly, and you get so shy and it looks adorable."

"Shut up, frog," Arthur grumbled. He only got a chuckle in return and stuck his tongue out at the smug face. He used a hand to cover up one half of his face and turned his head to the side to hide the other. He shook his head and shot him a glare. "And I don't understand what your fascination with my hair is anyways, you freak. So what?"

"Do you know how you looked when I first laid eyes on you?" Francis murmured, reaching up to pull both of Arthur's hands into his and comb his fingers through his lover's pale ones. "You were such a timid looking thing that I was worried that I would have to ease you into everything that we get into together." He shook his head, looking back on that day and wincing slightly as he no doubt remembered it as clearly as Arthur did. "And then you slapped me, and I thought, 'Thank god, this one is a bit of a spit-fire.'" His blush ran hotter, blood coming closer and closer to the surface. "And I had to have you, you know. And, this hair, your normal clothes, it just continues to prove to me that you're not some sheepish little thing that's scared of his shadow and just happens to play electric really well; you're strong and independent."

"And I don't need no man," Arthur joked, earning himself a chuckle and a light swat on the ass. "Hey!"

"Yes, you don't need a man, but you chose one." He pressed their forehead together so that their noses touched and their eyes were an inch away from each other. "You chose me. You express yourself without really caring how people will judge you, and you're just so damn

beautiful.” He squeezed their fingers and beamed. “And your hair represents that; your free spirit, your fire, and everything else I love about you is nestled amongst your natural self and just accenting it rather than completely masking it to hide yourself.”

Arthur opened his mouth, but he had to close it again because he really couldn’t think of something to say to that. How could he? It was possibly the sweetest thing someone had said, and he could still feel that damned flush climbing towards the very tips of his ears. He squeezed back and sighed softly.

“You’re a fucking asshat,” he hissed. Francis’s smile dropped, and he almost laughed at his dorky boyfriend. “I have no idea how to reply to that, and you have rendered me speechless. I hope you’re proud of yourself because it’s probably never going to happen again.” Francis leaned in to kiss him, but he pressed a finger to those eager lips. “Ah, ah, ah. What did I say? Not in public places.” The smile drooped again, so he grinned mischievously. “However, if you were to offer me to come skip with you so we could make out to your heart’s content back at yours or mine, then I might say yes.”

Needless to say, he’d never left the school that fast before in his life, and he was sure that by the time they were buckled up in Francis’s car, his shoulder hurt as much as the other blonde’s did. However, he could only stare at the exuberant expression of his lover and smile, running fingers through his blonde locks and getting them caught on the streaks of red.

Chapter End Notes

I am in a rush, so no witty remark as we finish this other than I am glad that you guys liked it.^^ Expect more from me on this front in the near future. :)

(I'll probably go back and add more later.)

I've been using the same words as all the other chapters, so please excuse the no translations.^^'

End Notes

Translation Notes (I shouldn't need to with these, but I will):

French

Lapin/Mon lapin: Rabbit/My rabbit

Amour: Love

Mes amis: My friends

Maman and Papa: Mom and Dad

La Vie en Rose: Life in Pink or Life Through Rose-Colored Glasses- Popular song by Edith Piaf, written in 1945

Cher: Darling

Bon: Good/Right/etc

Spanish

Siesta: Nap

Amigo: Friend

British

Poof: Gay person (typically derogatory)

Canadian

Timmies: Tim Hortons (a superior Starbucks that is found in Canada)

Latin

Et tu: And you? (allusions to Shakespeare for the win)

Notes:

I know Toris (Lithuania) is not typically depicted as being homophobic- it's typically the opposite- but Lithuania is actually one of the most homophobic countries in the world, rivalling Russia with its anti-gay laws.

Also, the taste in music might be different for a lot of people, but when I think British Punk, I think the stuff from like the 80s that was seedy and raw and beautiful. If you didn't recognise any of the bands, I recommend them.^^

~Rose

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